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HEROINES
OF
SACRED HISTORY.

Eliza R.
BY MRS. STEELE.

—— the path of the just is
as a shining light.—*Prov. iv. 18.*

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:
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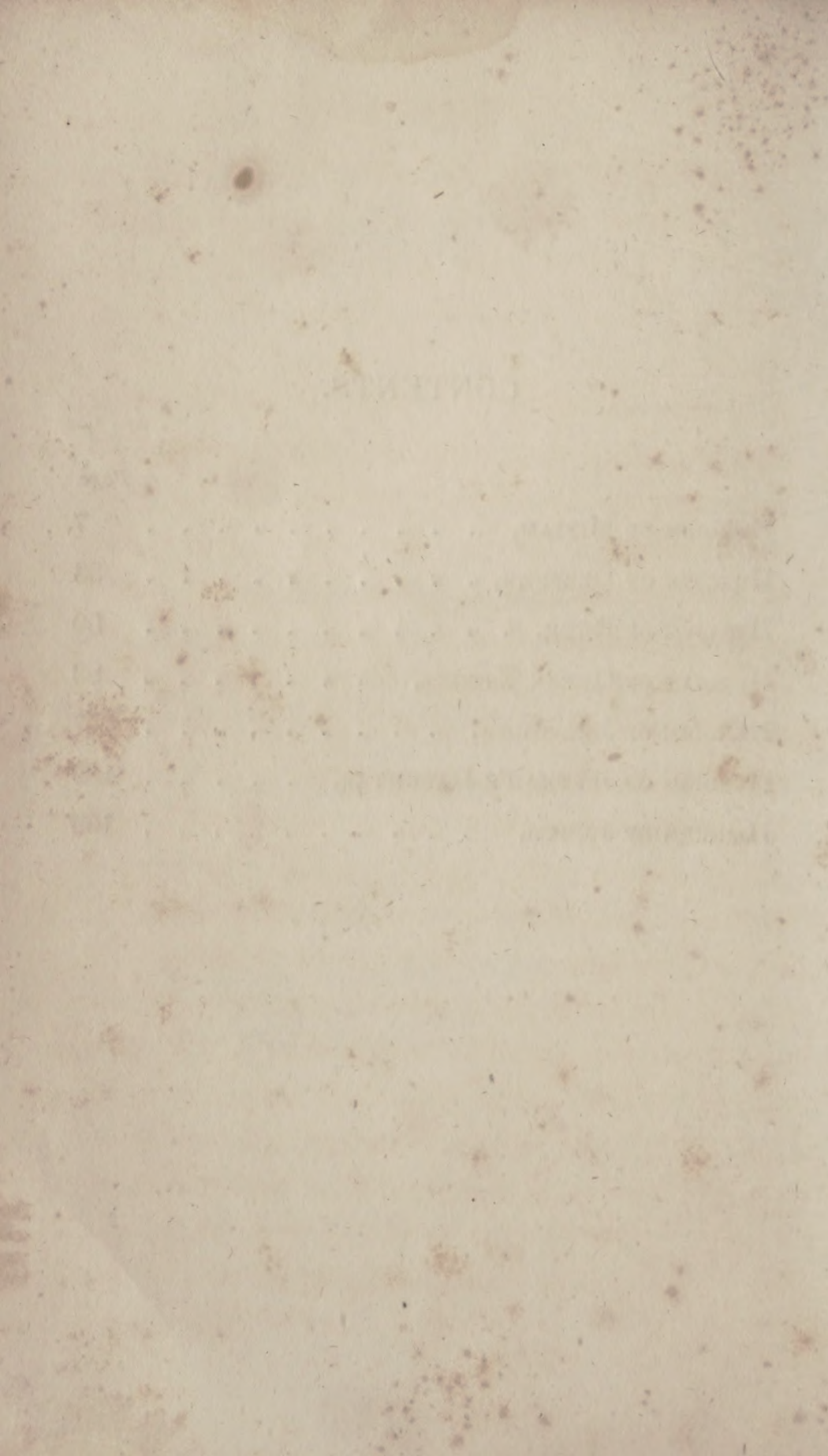
Mrs. Hennen Jennings

April 26, 1933



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P R E F A C E .

In this age of paper, when the world seems busy "making many books," and, when sailors logs, and prison calenders, are searched for some rare novelty, I turn over the well filled leaves of my bible, and sigh that its rich pastures are neglected to feed upon such empty husks. Within this wondrous book, is every kind of literary excellence. In poetry, its sublime and beautiful strains have remained unequalled. The delineation of character, historical, moral, and epistolary portions, are also unrivalled. To quote the words of a late and able writer upon this great book,* "when we explore the treasures of its pages, and seem for a moment to grasp the full measure of its wonders, and its knowledge, how is our admiration heightened!" The lover of sentiment, of touching incident, and of soul-stirring narration, need not seek the shelves of

* Rev. Gardiner Spring, D. D.

romance to gratify his taste ; let him open these glowing pages, and he will here behold such themes touched with a master hand. I have sketched a few of the most conspicuous female characters, pourtrayed in these divine writings, hoping to turn the attention of those, whose ignorance of their contents renders them distasteful, towards the many beauties which they contain. In order to render them more attractive, I have drawn with them, the costumes, scenery, and manners, of the several periods in which they lived. If this little book, shall lead one of its readers to the fountain from which it is taken, the author's purpose shall have been answered.

E. R. S.

New York October, 10th.

HEROISM OF MIRIAM.

"O my people! what have I done to thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me! For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."—*Micah* vi. 3, 4.

MANY and vast were the temples and palaces which arose in the ancient city of Zoan in Egypt; and among the most stately and gracefully proportioned was the palace of Pharoah, the King.

In a room of lofty dimensions plated and carved with gold, richly hung with embroidered stuffs, and filled with furniture of costly material, was the king of this renowned and fertile land. But not at ease was he among the regal trappings around him, nor cast he even one admiring glance at all this splendor. Walking restlessly about the apartment, he bent his brow, as if musing upon some subject

which deeply annoyed him ; for cares and vexations will intrude even in a royal palace. In this apartment, besides the king were three persons ; near the door stood two aged women who cowered beneath their large dark mantles as if anxious to screen themselves from observation ; while at the window which opened upon a marble colonade was a man apparently absorbed in gazing upon the vast area of brick and marble which lay beneath him, filled with thousands of human beings, or, the glittering waters of the Nile which flowed beyond.

“Sesostris,” said the king stopping abruptly before him, “why dost thou not counsel me in this matter ? These Hebrew nurses whom thou seest at the door, have refused my command to put the male children to death. Must I stoop to embrue my hands with the blood of these pitiful crones ? What am I to do if they will not obey me ? If I suffer this Hebrew people to increase as they have of late we shall be overrun with them, and they will take possession of my country !”

“Nay, my brother and my king,” replied Sesostris, “it were not best to permit them thus to multiply, as in case of war they will join the enemy, and we shall be conquered. Can they not be forced to intermarry with our people, so that in time we shall be one nation ?”

"No, brother. They have other Gods, other laws, and keep themselves quite distinct. They also rely upon promises made by their God, as they say, to their fathers, that they shall one day be a great people—conquerors of Egypt mayhaps!"

"They live too easy, O king. Give them all the heavy labour of the land; let them be worn and wearied, and their haughty spirit will be quelled, and by degrees they will die off."

"It shall be done," said the king. Then turning to the women he said, "And now ye false and deceitful old women, leave my presence ere I relent of my mercy towards you!" Silently and rapidly the ancient females withdrew.

Task masters were set over the children of Israel, and they were compelled to work hard from morning to night, 'in mortar, and in brick, and in all service of the field.' Their lives were rendered bitter by this cruel bondage; but it answered not the purpose of their master, for, 'the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied and grew.' Determined to rid himself of this noxious race, Pharoah now issued a decree which brought anguish to every Hebrew bosom.

Thus ran the decree: 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river; but every daughter ye may save alive.'

In a mud hut on the banks of the Nile dwelt a Hebrew and his wife ; Amram and Jochebed, both of the house of Levi. Here, in secrecy and bitter sorrow, was the unhappy wife delivered of a son. There was no joy in the house that a man child was born into the world, but groans of anguish burst from his parents hearts that he was doomed to a miserable death. No smiles heralded his coming ; tears fell upon his little face, and sighs broke forth from the bosoms around him. For three months Jochebed continued to conceal the boy. His merry laugh, which to other mothers would be rich music, brought a pang to her. She dreaded lest this sound should bring the murderers to the door, and hushed him into silence. Miriam, the daughter of Amram, although quite young was of great service to her mother, for she took charge of her other brother Aaron, and assisted to keep the infant quiet. With a thoughtfulness beyond her years, she parried all intrusion even from their own kin, lest his existence through their means should become known. He could not however be always concealed, and his parents became aware they were suspected. He had been heard to weep one night by a passer by, and Jochebed was continually questioned regarding him. She was advised to obey the decree lest the whole family should be punished, but resolutely

refused, until one day informed the officers, who put the decree in execution were asking about her. Then it became evident they must give up the child or suffer with him. After many a solemn conference together, this unhappy family came to the resolution of casting their child out upon the river.

At her father's bidding, Miriam brought from the river's side an armful of the reed Papyrus, which she tore off in strips, and wove into a stout basket. This her father covered with pitch which rendered it water tight. While they were thus engaged with their work, the unhappy Jochebed sat in a remote corner, pressing her boy to her heart, tears of bitterness streaming in torrents from her eyes. Unconscious of evil the child smiled in its mother's face, presenting by its joyousness a strange contrast to his sorrowing family. "Cheer thee Jochebed," said her husband as he bent over his work, "we shall not be utterly exterminated; some one will be saved to go to the promised land, and why not our boy? Remember the words of our noble Joseph when on his death bed: 'God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob,'—in my calculation the time is not far off. I rely on his promises, and

believe the days of our bondage are coming to an end."

Jochebed only answered by her tears.

"How know ye not," said the young Miriam, "that our darling boy is destined to be our leader and deliverer? Shake not your head thus sadly, mother. Hath he not been wonderfully preserved while our neighbors' children have perished? And if he yet be suffered to live, I shall believe it a miraculous manifestation of God in his favor."

"Alas, how may he escape?" said the mother sorrowfully. "If the waves do not engulph him, he will starve, or be devoured by a crocodile."

"Nay dearest mother, I shall watch him too well. As the little ark floats down the stream, I shall follow it, and guard it, even if it float for days or months. Perhaps it may be wafted beyond the dominions of this wicked king, and then I will take it up and nourish it."

"Thou, Miriam? How can so slight a girl as thou do this? How wilt thou subsist? Thy father is the proper person."

"Not so, mother, for if father is missed from his work the task-master will pursue him, discover the child, and we shall all perish. Trust the boy to me, mother, I will risk my life to save him."

“Blessings on my noble girl!” cried her father. “Thou hast inspired me, also, to hope our God will save the boy, for his faithful sister’s sake, if not for ours.”

The ark was finished. Miriam placed within a soft bed, and approached Jochebed to take the child. Sad was the parting then between the mother and her darling boy; unable to see him go, she fled into an inner room, to vent her anguish in sobs and bitter groans. After a long, last kiss, Miriam and her father launched the frail bark upon the Nile.

“Farewell, father,” said Miriam fondly; “cheer up my mother, and tell her to trust in God, who, I feel assured, will yet rescue the boy from the hands of his enemies. Depend upon me. All that a tender, devoted sister can do, shall be done.”

“Farewell, Miriam,” said her father, while the tears fell down upon his beard, “I trust in the Lord and in thee! May the God of Abraham protect thee and strengthen thee!”

Hour after hour the tiny vessel floated on; the little occupant smiling and playing with his fingers, or amusing himself with the food which lay near him. Hour after hour his firm-hearted sister walked on beside it, under the blazing sun of Egypt, or sat

upon a bank when it became obstructed in its course, or was lodged in the bushes which lined the river side. Heat and fatigue unheeded, her eyes and thoughts were fixed on her charge alone, or lifted in prayer to God for its safety. At mid-day the little barge was whirled among some rushes, in the outskirts of the city, where it became stationary. Miriam concealed herself behind a pile of bricks, and sat down to watch it. Frequently she drew it to the shore and fed the child. At length she drew it beneath the shade of some palm trees which grew upon the bank, and sat down near it. How did her heart beat at every approaching step! dreading lest her charge should be observed before the shades of night should enable her once more to float it away from the city. But the hours passed on and no eye fell upon it. The Nile flowed slowly at her feet, its banks adorned by a fringe of papyrus, whose tall and slender stalks, bent to the summer breeze, or raised aloft the plume-like blossoms which crowned their heads. No sound disturbed the silence, except when the brilliant Flamingo stalked by her, flashing his scarlet and orange plumage to the sun, or the stately Ibis pursued its chase of the water serpents among the rushes.

A strong wind arose, and the waves were cast upon the shore. Miriam started with horror as she

beheld a drowned infant thrown upon the sand ; one of her own nation sacrificed to Pharoah's cruelty. An instant passed, and, rushing through the blue lotus flowers, which floated on the stream, an enormous crocodile pounced upon the child ; opening its dreadful jaws, the innocent was soon engulfed in the horrid chasm, and the creature disappeared. Aroused by footsteps Miriam turned her head : a party of miserable Hebrews passed, half naked, and surrounded by overseers, and bending beneath a load of brick and straw.

The sound of music next attracted her attention : a religious procession was passing, and she gazed with disgust, as she observed the priests were leading in golden chains, the sacred crocodile ! The back of this hideous monster was richly painted and gilded, while bracelets of gold and of jewels adorned its shapeless legs. She watched him, as with his train he entered the temple. This superb edifice was surrounded by four noble porticoes, and was raised upon an elevated platform of marble steps. A long avenue of Sphinxes led to it, and before the edifice stood two obelisks of rose coloured granite, whose slender shafts seemed to reach the heavens, and whose sides were carved in raised hieroglyphics. The ceiling of this temple was painted blue, and studded with golden stars ; its sides richly

carved, gilded, and painted. In the centre stood a tank for the service of the Sacred Crocodile, while on one side was a room, where, lying upon a costly carpet, he was waited on, and adorned by people of the first rank in the city.

The sun was now sinking behind the hills of Ramases, when the sound of female voices met the ear of Miriam. She arose with alacrity and looked forth. "Now is my sweet brother safe," she said, "for surely no female bosom could devise aught evil against so lovely a babe."

The females approached, and by the richness of their apparel, and by their numerous attendants, were ladies of high rank. Above the rest, was one distinguished for the graceful and majestic form. She was beautiful, also, and the rich blood called forth by exercise cast a brilliant shade over her slightly bronzed skin. As she came nearer Miriam discovered it was the princess Themestris. Then the heart of this loving sister died within her. It was the daughter of Pharaoh, of their relentless oppressor, who approached, who, if the child were discovered would not probably dare resist her father's decree to save a Hebrew infant. Miriam looked around in despair, but the Princess was near and concealment for her charge was vain.

Her heart upon the rack, Miriam saw the Princess

stand upon the rivers bank quite near the rushes. among which was the basket containing her precious treasure. He was not observed and she breathed free ; but, weary and hungry, the babe just then awoke from slumber, and uttered a feeble cry.

“What noise is that?” asked one of the ladies—and Miriam threw herself upon the ground in anguish.

“It was the cry of a crocodile,” said another, “let us fly ere we be devoured.”

“Silence !” cried the Princess.

The wail of an infant was distinctly heard.

“It is a child,” said Themestris, “and now I discover a basket among yonder rushes. Bring it hither some of ye.”

The attendants hastened to obey her, and the basket was soon laid at her feet. When opened, a babe of wondrous beauty lay within. It was weeping bitterly, and raised its little hand, imploringly at the curious faces which surrounded his cradle. The princess gazed at the child and tears streamed from her eyes over her beautiful face.

“Oh my father, this is thy cruel policy !” she cried. Then turning to her women, she said, “This is doubtless one of the Hebrew children, whose parents forced to throw it into the Nile, have thus sought to preserve it.”

“Shall we throw it back again?” asked one of the attendants.

“Throw it back again! Have you the heart for such a thing!” exclaimed the Princess in indignation.

“It is no doubt preserved by the Gods for some especial purpose and I accept the charge. Osiris! God of the Nile! if thou hast sent this babe to me, behold I receive it and will rear it as my own.”

Who shall describe the emotions which passed through the heart of Miriam during this scene. Tears of gratitude and joy burst from her eyes, and she knelt to thank that merciful God, who had saved her brother from destruction, and his parents from misery.

With a fortitude beyond her years, she left her hiding place and approached the group. Sauntering carelessly along, she paused as if gazing at them; when one of the ladies pitying her childish curiosity called her gaily to them.

“Come hither child, and see the young crocodile we have caught.”

“Miriam came forward uttering many expressions of admiration and wonder.

“And is my royal lady going to adopt the child?” she asked dropping her eyes to conceal the emotion which she feared would betray her. “She is: for she is as benevolent as she is beautiful.”

“Then, if she will listen to her handmaid, I know a Hebrew nurse who dwelleth near and who is very skilful. I will fetch her if the noble Princess please.”

“It is well thought of girl;” said Themestris. “If it be a Hebrew infant, a nurse of that nation were more fitting. Be quick, child, and see thou hast her here by the time I have finished bathing in yonder marble Bath.” Miriam needed no spur but springing forward was soon on her way homeward. The basket had been many hours upon the river, on account of its frequent stoppages, but Miriam was at her home in a much shorter time. “O mother, mother!” she cried, “did I not prophesy truly; God hath saved our babe, he is as I predicted, destined to greatness, for the Princess hath taken him.” Her sudden appearance and her unexpected good news, so overpowered her mother, that she almost fainted. Reviving soon, she was on her way to the spot; joy enabling her to keep up with the bounding steps of Miriam. With a tolerable degree of fortitude Jochebed saluted the daughter of Pharaoh. “Take this child,” said the charitable Princess—“nurse it for me, and let it want for nothing, for it is the adopted child of a Princess. Thou shalt be bountifully paid. Call him Moses, because he was *drawn out* the water. As Jochebed received her child

again, her emotion overcame her, and she dropped her head upon that of the infant while a sudden palor overspread her face. Miriam ran to her; and the Princess whispered, "Poor creature! doubtless she has been forced to give her own child up to death. I hope this will awaken her affection and heal her wounded heart." The Princess and train returned to the Palace; while Jochebed, supported by her heroic daughter, set out for her own now happy home. By what simple means did God bring his purpose to pass! A tender girl and a charitable female, were apparently the preservers of this child; but God had selected them as fitting agents. And this infant—who that looked upon him then, could imagine the mighty deeds he was destined to perform? A great multitude was to be taken from a powerful and unwilling nation; a countless army overthrown; kings and nations swept from the land, to give place to his wandering host!

But I shall not touch upon the story of Moses except where Miriam is concerned. Who, after seeing the heroic conduct of the young Miriam, and her devotion to her brother in which she certainly risked her life, would imagine her capable of her after conduct? Who could recognise the watcher by the Nile, in the rebel of the Desert of Zin? In this one shade upon the character of Miriam, we may

behold the taint of that indwelling sin, which is seen to shadow the fair fame of earth's wisest and best and which in after years required the great atoning sacrifice of our merciful Saviour.

Ambition seemed the form in which the tempter came to Miriam. We have seen her constant prediction to her mother, that Moses would be a *great man*; which prophesy displays the tenor of her thoughts and hopes. By this overweening ambition, she fell from her high estate. Let her fall warn us to look into our own bosoms, and remember.—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” When the nurse of Moses was no longer needed, he was taken to the Princess, and soon raised to power. But he always clung to his nation, and refused to be called an Egyptian, or the son of Pharoah's daughter.

It is unnecessary to say any thing more of the succeeding events of the life of Moses; or of the wondrous miracles wrought by him before Pharoah to induce him to let his people go; as my readers are, or *I hope they are*, sufficiently acquainted with them. Pharoah was dead, and a new king arose, who fully appreciated the worth of the Hebrews as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It seemed for a time as if the miracles only irritated the

king, and induced him to render the Hebrews bondage more bitter. Then was Miriam of great service to her countrymen,—confident in the promise of God, she inspired courage into their hearts by her unswerving faith. As a reward for her trust in him, God bestowed upon her the gift of Prophecy, and placed her beside her brothers, Moses, and Aaron, as leaders, instructors, and judges of the children of Israel.

The Hebrews departed, but were soon followed by the Egyptian army. Few were the hearts which then failed not, when they beheld themselves hemmed in between a raging foe, and a vast ocean! A seditious murmur arose. “Were there no graves in Egypt!” they cried, “that we are brought hither to die? It were better to serve Egyptians, than perish in the wilderness.”

“Fear ye not!” said Moses. “Stand still; see the salvation which God will now bring you. The Egyptians whom ye see this day, ye shall never see again! The Lord will fight for you! Hold your peace.” Awed into silence, the people gazed up at Moses, who was standing upon a ledge of rocks above them. Moses stretched out his miraculous rod over the sea—there came a rushing wind—with a mighty roar the waters fell back on each side, and the Israelites beheld a dry path through the midst of

the deep, rolling sea ! Directed by Moses the people passed over this wondrous pathway, looking fearfully up at the lofty wall of living emerald which arose on each side ; while far above was a fringe of white foam, as if the waves were struggling and chafing to dash themselves down to their natural depths, and overwhelm the intruders into their secret haunt.

The eastern shore was attained in safety, and the Israelites turned to look upon the sea, when lo ! like a crimson cord spanning the great ocean, the scarlet-clad hosts of Pharoah were already on their track. The foot of the foremost touched the shore, when, with a mighty crash the mass of waters fell, and the armies of Egypt were whelmed beneath the waves !

Filled with gratitude and triumph Moses broke forth in the following song, accompanied by the exulting Miriam, and other women striking their timbrels :

MOSES AND MIRIAM'S SONG.

To Jehovah I will sing,
Who hath triumphed gloriously ;
Horse and rider conquering,
He hath cast them in the sea.

My salvation is my song,
By Jehovah rendered strong.

He is my God,
I will praise him ;
My father's God,
I will exalt him.

God is a man of war,
Jehovah is his name ;
Pharoah's chariots and his hosts
He hath brought to fear and shame.
His captains over ten
In the Red Sea found a grave ;
To the depths his chosen men,
Like stones sank through the wave.

Thy right hand, O Jehovah !
Is glorious in its power ;
Thy right hand, O Jehovah !
Made the sons of Egypt cower.
In thy excellency, Lord,
Thou hast sent thy wrath abroad :
And as stubble burned those,
Who 'gainst thy glory rose.
Thy nostrils breath,
The waters heap ;
And fraught with death,
Uprose the deep !

The enemy said :

 Their path I'll pursue,
And the Israelite dead,
 The desert shall strew.

I will draw forth my sword !
On the Hebrew abhorred
My wrath shall be poured.

 The east wind sped—
Through the waves, their dead
Fell sinking as lead.

Who is like unto thee
 Among Gods, O our Lord !

Who is like unto thee ?

 Thy name be adored.

Glorious in holiness ;

 Radiant in splendors ;

We, in our fearfulness,

 Gaze on thy wonders.

At thy stretched out right hand,

And thy mighty command,

The earth swallowed their band !

Forth, by thy mercy, the ransomed are led ;

And under thy wing for refuge have fled.

 The people shall hear,

 And tremble with fear,

And Philistia sorrow that Israel is near.

The great dukes of Edom will shrink at the tale ;
The mighty of Moab before us will quail ;
And the Canaanites race from the country shall fail.

Fear and dread shall on them fall—
Still as stones then stand they all,
While thy people shall pass over
Thy purchased people, O Jehovah !
By them led on, we shall attain
Our promised heritage—and gain
The Holy Mount where thou wilt reign.

Jehovah shall rule and worshipped shall be,
As surely as Pharoah was cast in the sea
With his horses and chariots and warrior band,
While the children of Israel past through on dry land

Then shook Miriam her timbrel, and sang the chorus.

To Jehovah I will sing,
Who hath triumphed gloriously ;
Horse and rider conquering,
He hath cast them in the sea !

Sadly turn we now to relate the fall Miriam. We have said she was ambitious—this ambition was fully gratified when she saw herself associated with her brothers, Aaron and Moses, as leaders and judges of the Israelites. She was revered by all, as a prophetess ; and enjoyed especial honor as the sister of

Moses. Zipporah, the wife of Moses, whom he had left in the land of Cush, with her father, Jethro, had lately arrived and joined her husband, and of course, obtained much of the people's good will as wife of their leader; and Miriam stood not alone in their regard or in that of Moses. She, however, reigned without a rival when Moses judged the people; for he needed help, and Aaron was engaged with his priestly duties. When the father of Zipporah arrived, he advised Moses to lighten his toil by dividing his people in tens, fifties, hundreds and thousands, and by appointing rulers over each band. Miriam then no longer saw herself a distinguished associate of her brothers, as her office was divided, and she became merely one of the many rulers. Forgetful she owed all to God, and that he might take away his gifts, Miriam looked upon Jethro and Zipporah as usurpers and rivals. Day and night she devised plans to overthrow their counsels. She endeavored to interest Aaron in her cause; and, much attached to his sister, and of a gentle nature, he listened to her, and pitied her, when, perhaps, he would have done better to have reproved her harshly.

The Israelites were now in the wilderness of Zin, a large, level plain, surrounded by eminences which shot up their bare granite peaks to the heavens. The twelve tribes were encamped by threes on each

side of this immense plain, having at each corner the standards erected. Judah bore upon his banner a Lion, while the other three bore the figures of the Ox, Eagle, and Man. In the centre arose the wondrous Tabernacle, glowing in purple, and blue, and scarlet, and gold embroidery. It stood within a large space, enclosed by a fence of linen curtains, suspended upon pillars of brass. Within this enclosure stood the brazen sea, and great altar of brass, and tables of marble. Miriam was sitting at the door of her tent, uttering complaints of Moses, in the ear of Aaron, and within hearing of many witnesses.

“Moses hath transgressed, seeing he hath married this Midian woman,” said Miriam. “Who is she that all honor her thus as if there were no other women in the camp? And who is her father that he deviseth mischief against me?”

“I am sorry for thee, my sister, and will speak to Moses regarding thee; for didst thou not save his life?”

“Yea, what were Moses, were it not for me? He taketh too much upon him. Hath the Lord only revealed his will by him? Hath he not also given thee and me the spirit of prophecy?”

“Yea, indeed he hath,” said Aaron.

Suddenly a cloud came down and rested at the

door of the Tabernacle, and the people knew the Lord was among them. Then every one stood still in his place, and listened, as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron and Miriam to come into the court of the Tabernacle. Tremblingly they obeyed the mandate, and walked up in silence undisturbed except by the tinkling of the golden bells upon the robe of Aaron. They stood before the Tabernacle in the face of the whole congregation. The tall and stately figure of Moses was enveloped in a large mantle of white linen, fringed with blue; while Aaron was arrayed in the gorgeous vestments of the High Priest—the breast of his blue upper-dress dazzling with the emblematic jewels, while the bottom was hung with scarlet pomegranates and golden bells—his white linen mitre circled by a golden band, and his girdle and linen under-dress richly embroidered with scarlet, and blue, and purple. Miriam glorying in her situation, and expecting new honors, stood between them, with her head elevated so that the golden horn which ornamented her forehead, was erected on high.

“Hear now my words,” said the Lord. “If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in visions and dreams only; but my servant, Moses, who is faithful to me, shall be spoken to, mouth to mouth—not in dark

speeches as to you, but is honored above you by beholding the similitude of the Lord. Knowing this, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?" Then trembled Aaron and Miriam, for they saw the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.

The cloud departed from the sanctuary; they turned to gaze upon each other, when lo! they saw that Miriam was a *leper*! The color was gone from her blooming cheek, and her skin was turned to the livid hue of the dead! Aaron threw himself at the feet of Moses.

"Alas, my lord," he said, "I beseech thee forgive us our sin, for indeed we have spoken foolishly against thee. Take pity upon Miriam, and do not let her remain thus as one dead ere the tomb have closed over her."

Moses interceded for her with God. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee," he cried. The Lord refused to heal Miriam, but ordered her to undergo the usual cleansing of lepers, and to live seven days without the camp.

In the sight of all Israel was the humiliated Miriam carried without the limits of the camp, where a tent was erected for her. Here she remained seven days, undergoing the usual lustrations and sacrifices of those tainted with leprosy. Her

long and beautiful hair was shaven off—her clothes were washed as well as her body. Upon the seventh day the Priests visited her, and after examination, she was pronounced whole. The usual ceremony then followed, in which one of Aaron's sons, Miriam's nephew, officiated. A vessel of pure water was brought, which had been taken from a running spring. The Priest then took two birds, one of which was killed over the water—a piece of cedar wood, some scarlet wool, and a sprig of hysop were, with the remaining bird, dipped into the blood, and sprinkled upon Miriam. The bird was then let loose in the desert. Being pronounced clean, Miriam was again led into the camp. The next day she presented at the altar a lamb to be sacrificed, and some oil. She was anointed with the oil after it had been offered up, and the Priests absolved her from all other duties.

Miriam was thoroughly repentant, and humbled. Her character was much improved by this chastening: and pride and ambition were for ever at rest within her bosom. Let this one shadow upon her fair life be forgotten, as she was one of God's chosen agents for the furtherance of his great and wonderful purposes.

The children of Israel once more broke up their

encampment, and journeyed through the wilderness. At Kadesh they again encamped in the desert of Paran, and there Miriam died. The Hill of Paran is a remarkable pile of rocks, whose slender, jagged spires give it, at a distance, the appearance of a cathedral. In the side of this rock, they cut out a tomb for Miriam. It was richly carved within, while over the door was her name, and the date of her death, surrounded with ornamented work. Her body was bound with linen bands, and laid upon a bier: she was followed to her tomb by her weeping relatives of the house of Levi, and a train of hired mourners whose death-wail awoke the desert echoes. A carved Sarcophagus, filled with spices, received her body—the door was closed—the train dispersed, and the Israelites resumed their march, leaving Miriam in her lonely resting-place.

THE MORAL.

Let us learn from the story of Miriam to crush every aspiration of ambition which may swell our bosoms. How was her glory tarnished by this spirit. Surrounded by friends and admirers, and exalted by God to a high office among her countrymen, she strove to advance higher, and fell into the shades of humiliation and sorrow.

Remember the words of our Saviour's apostle, who tells us, "Godliness with *contentment* is great gain."

THE HEROISM OF DEBORAH.

“ Their land is full of idols ; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.”—*Isaiah* ii. 8.

“ Harness the horses ! and get up ye horsemen ! and stand forth with your helmets ; furbish the spear and put on the brigandines.”—*Jeremiah* xlv. 4.

NIGHT with her lustrous stars, her silence and repose, had passed away, and soft eyed dawn heralded by gentle zephyrs, and breathing out perfume, arose from Asia's mists like the poet's Venus from the sea, all smiles and gladness. Each flower threw out its fairy petals, and wafted forth its fragrant incense to the day. Almond and citron blossoms, brilliant pomegranate, and oleander tossed the dew from their delicate heads, and shook their fragile branches in the morning breeze. The birds were on every bough singing their rejoicings to the coming day ; for as yet the sun had not appeared, but clouds of rose and purple told of his near ap-

proach, and threw a softened radiance over plain and hill and valley. A clear and gentle river—Kishon, “that ancient river, the river Kishon,” wound through the verdant plain. By its side arose a sloping hill, whose summit was crowned by a grove of oaks and elms, among whose shadows a lordly temple was just made visible as the sun’s first rays fell on the hill-top, while all below still lay in shade. The rising light revealed its snowy porticoes and lofty arches, and graceful columns of rare proportion ; then passing down the hill shone on a procession of solemn worshippers who were winding along the river’s bank, and ascending to the temple above. Conspicuous among the throng were the sacred oxen, who gaily decorated with ribbons, and wreathed with roses, were led by young boys clad in white robes and crowned with garlands. Behind them came a train of women dancing, and singing to instruments of music ; while preceding and around the victims were several hundred priests whose black robes threw the only shadow over a landscape now brightly illumined by the broadly risen sun. The procession ascended the hill ; the temple doors were thrown open ; the Priests entered and advanced to the altar. There upon two pedestals, stood the gods they came to worship. The one, a man cast in brass, having an ox’s head—the

other of marble, and human shape, clothed in a coat of golden mail, wearing a crown and wielding a sword; the former was Moloch, and the latter Baal. To these gods of marble and gold the priests and people had come to ask for protection from a powerful enemy, who in predatory bands made inroads upon them, and carried away flocks, and people, and goods.

Reader, canst thou say in what land arose this temple, these images of marble, and these idol worshippers? Canst thou believe it was in Israel? In the promised land? Alas—it was the dear-bought land of Canaan, and these deluded idolaters were the sons of Judah, once God's own peculiar people! No remembrance of their former errors and their previous punishment could wean this stiff-necked race from their love of idol worship. Forgotten was all the forbearing love of their gracious God—forgotten was his power which led them out of Egypt, and placed them in this lovely land—forgotten were all the denunciations of Jehovah against idolatry—again they sinned, and now again, in consequence of this sin, were plunged in misery and woe. The Canaanites whom the Israelites had subdued and confined to their cities subject to tribute, had now been stirred up against them. For many years they harrassed them by coming suddenly

upon them in small bands, carrying away every thing or person which fell in their power.

In consequence of these incursions, the highways were deserted, the fields were uncultivated, and the children of Israel were sorely oppressed. To arrest this evil, the mass of the people sought not for protection from their all-powerful God, but blindly hewed them out gods of stone, and built groves in their high places, and called on their images to save; "yet can they not answer or save them out of their trouble!"

The last of the priests had but just entered the temple, when, bursting through their ranks and uttering shrieks of terror, a woman, one of the dancers, threw herself before the statues; it was Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite—the roses which had wreathed her lank locks, had fallen on her shoulder, and the white fillets were waving in disorder over her sallow shrivelled cheeks in bright contrast to their tawney hue. "O, Baal, save us!" she cried in distraction. "Now save us, for the enemy is upon us!" A chorus of shrieks arose from the women without, who came pressing confusedly into the temple. "The Canaanites are upon us!" they cried—"O Moloch shield us!"

Eager to save themselves from the invaders, the priests hastily closed the iron-studded doors of the

temple, heedless of the many shrieking women whom they thus cruelly shut out. Their hopes of admission vain, the worshippers fled to the groves or down the hill, followed by the affrighted oxen, and their youthful leaders.

Jael arose from the ground and endeavoured to pass out of the door. "O my child!" she cried—"my Zillah is without—O let me go forth and shield her, or die with her!"

The priests however were bent upon saving themselves from harm, and the wailings and passionate entreaties of the miserable mother were unheeded by hearts as hard as the marble gods they worshipped.

At last the shouts of the enemy and cries of their victims were hushed, and the noise of trampling steeds receded. The temple doors were slowly opened, and their safety being ascertained, the priests of Baal came forth. There was nothing to be seen near them, but afar off they descried a band of horsemen riding rapidly away, each bearing a captive upon his horse; while behind them the sacred oxen were goaded onward by a powerful escort. As the last of the horsemen turned the wood which hid them from sight, it was perceived he bore away upon his horse a young girl, who, with arms uplifted, was loudly calling for aid. In

her struggles a scarlet girdle fell to the ground ; Jael swiftly ran down the hill, and hurriedly examined it.

“ They have taken my daughter !” she cried, with a burst of woe—“ O Zillah, that I could have died to save thee !”

Prostrate upon the ground, the miserable woman threw dust upon her head, invoking curses upon the Canaanites, and vowing deep vengeance for this cruel wrong.

During these troubles the Judge of Israel died, and Deborah became a “ mother in Israel.” Deborah, the widow of Lapidoth, was a woman of a strong and masculine mind ; more capable of ruling the affairs of the nation than many of her countrymen. Of this they were well aware ; and came to her for counsel in any emergency. The piety of Deborah was great, and her God had bestowed upon her the gift of prophecy ; thus using her as a means of keeping the faith in Israel, and drawing her country-people from the dreadful crime of idolatry, into which they had fallen. The grief of Deborah at their delinquency was great ; as she foresaw the certain punishment their guilt would bring upon them. The present distress with which the country was afflicted, had been threatened them by their

prophetess ; but she was unheeded except by a few, who still worshipped at the tabernacle which was stationed at Shiloh.

Jabin, king of the Canaanites, who had once been defeated by the Israelites, and who retained his city of Hazor by paying tribute, had lately, according to Deborah's prediction, been stirred up by the Lord to make war upon Israel. He had harrassed them sorely, as seen above, by marauding parties led by his general Sisera. During the confusion which prevailed, every one came for counsel to Deborah ; and in course of time she was elected Judge of Israel. Her dwelling, which was near to Shiloh, was a long, low, stone building, arranged in a square around a court paved with marble. A piazza ran around this court, in front of the rooms, the pillars of which supported a balcony through which access was obtained to the upper chambers. From the centre of this court arose a lofty palm tree ; its smooth stalk bore no branches—but from the summit, circles of enormous leaves, some eight feet long, spread out like a vast canopy, throwing a cooling shade over court and balconies. Beneath this tree was the favorite seat of Deborah the Prophetess and Judge of Israel. Here she commanded a view of all her premises, and here her people obtained

ready access to her through a wide gateway opposite.

One morning Deborah resorted to her favorite palm tree, and placed herself upon her usual seat, which was a long divan of costly structure, having cushions covered with embroidered silk. Her dress was a dark colored stuff of Damascus, having a deep border of gold embroidery, confined with a girdle wrought with scarlet and jewels; a bandean was around her head, from which projected a short horn of gold, supporting a veil of thin muslin of India, which fell to her feet. She was surrounded by many of her people who had come to her for judgment. A voice of wailing was heard outside the gate, when, followed by a large concourse of people, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite entered the court. She wore a sack-cloth dress woven of black goats-hair, confined by a rope girdle, while her dark locks were thickly strewn with ashes.

“O help me, noble lady!” she cried; “help me, great Deborah! for I am stricken unto death!”—with a deep groan she sank on the ground before the feet of the Prophetess.

“What moves thee thus Jael?” asked Deborah, raising her. “Why art thou thus mourning in sack-cloth?”

“My daughter, my sweet child Zillah, hath been carried away by the enemy!” she exclaimed weeping. Others joining their cries to hers, bewailed the loss of relative, or cattle, and entreated Deborah for help against the invaders. Deborah listened while the outrage at the temple, just related, was described, as well as many similar inroads of the Canaanites.

“Where didst thou say thou wast, Jael, when thy child was ravished from thee?”

“At the temple of Baal, were we were going to sacrifice. O Deborah, hear the prayer of thy people! Awake! Collect an army, and punish the invaders of our land!”

“Is it to me, a worshipper of Jehovah, that the children of Baal come for succor? Away! Go to your gods for aid. I will not raise a hand to save you!”

“Nay Deborah, hear us!” they cried, “give us soldiers to defend our villages, or we shall all be taken captive—we and our little ones!”

“And ye would be well punished for your senseless idolatry!” said the indignant Deborah. “Do you not know—have ye not heard, that God has sworn he will punish you if ye forsake him? Have ye forgotten the words of holy Joshua who said,—‘If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods

then will he turn and do you hurt, and consume you !'

"Had ye approached the Tabernacle of your father's God at Shiloh, instead of resorting to the high places of Baal, ye might have heard the words of Joshua read, and these your sufferings fully foretold, yea foretold to be inflicted by this same nation. 'Know for a certainty,' saith Joshua, 'the Lord your God, will no more drive out any of these nations before you; but they shall be *snares* and *traps* unto you and *scourges* in your sides, and *thorns* in your eyes, until you perish off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you!' Ungrateful people that ye are! ye have forsaken a kind and powerful God, who hath ever cherished and exalted you, to worship metal and stone! Did Baal lead you from Egyptian bondage? Did Moloch enable you to conquer the nations around? Did Ashtaroth place you in this plenteous land? 'Tis Jehovah hath done this! O foolish and unwise people, do ye thus requite your Lord? Tremble then! for Jehovah hath given you up to destruction, and your false gods cannot save you! 'Let Israel remember the days of old,' saith Moses, 'and forget not their God, or he will consume them!' Hear the Lord's words, 'I will spend my arrows among them: they shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burn-

ing heat, and with bitter destruction—sword without and terror within shall destroy both the old man and the virgin !”

While Deborah addressed her people, the mists of error departed from before their eyes ; and when, as one inspired, she thundered in their ears the denunciations of Jehovah against idolatry, and the words of his servant Moses, the fear of God and remorse for their sin smote upon their hearts.

“ We are guilty before the Lord !” they cried in terror. “ We will indeed serve the Lord our God, and his voice alone we will obey !”

“ Away then !” cried Deborah. “ Prove your sincerity ! Cut down your groves,—throw down your images,—that the anger of the Lord be no more hurled against you. If ye truly obey him, I will pray him to raise up an army, and destroy your enemies from off the land.”

The words of Deborah, whom they all revered as a Prophetess, so excited the people, that they ran hither and thither, stopping not, until all their temples were demolished, groves hewn down and idols destroyed ; the gods they had worshipped in the morning were broken into fragments and reviled in the evening. Deborah, like a wise Governor, was determined to take advantage of the newly awakened zeal of her people, by assembling them, and lead-

ing them against Jabin the King of Hazor. She sent for Barak the son of Abinoam, a valiant and faithful soldier, who had always distinguished himself in fight. He came at her bidding and found her on her usual seat at the foot of the palm tree.

“I have had a revelation from the Lord God of Israel,” Deborah said to Barak.

“The people have turned from the error of their way, have left their gods and will worship Jehovah. The Lord hath revealed to me he will accept them, and will chastise those who have afflicted his chosen people. He commands thee to assemble an army and attack Jabin the Canaanite.”

Barak looked irresolute—“I will essay my best in this matter” he said “but I fear it will be no light thing to lead the people against the Canaanites. Thinkest thou we can attack Jabin when the enemy hath not left a shield or spear among us; and when he hath nine hundred chariots of iron?”

“What, Barak! knowest thou not we have the Lord on our side? What are spears and chariots to Jehovah? Thou art as the spies who feared the Amalekites.—‘We are not able to go up against this people; for they are stronger than we!’ they said—and what replied Joshua. ‘Fear ye not the people of this land—their defence hath departed from them and the Lord is with us—fear them not!’ Thus

also saith Deborah—fear them not. Assemble ten thousand men of the children of Zebulon and Napthali and the Lord will deliver Jabin's host into thy hand. Ascend to the fort upon Mount Tabor and I, Deborah, to whom the Lord hath given dominion over the mighty, will draw to the river Kishon, Sisera, the Captain of Jabin's army with his chariots and multitude ; and there I will deliver him into thy hands."

The great humility of Barak, and his consciousness of Israel's guilt, led him into the error of doubting,—he feared there was no mercy to be hoped from God, or help from Deborah. "The people have been so terrified and subdued by the Canaanites," he said—"that they will not assemble at my call. If thou wilt go with me, then I will go, for the people will believe the Lord hath sent thee ; but if thou wilt not go, then will not I."

"I will go with thee, O faint of heart !" said the heroic Deborah, "but know, for this thy want of trust in God, he will take the victory from thee and give it to another. The Lord hath revealed to me he will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman, and I, Deborah will reap the honor."

Deborah arose immediately to prepare for her journey. Sandals of leather embroidered with scarlet and jewels were laced upon her feet ; a

turban guarded her head from the sun ; and a large mantle was folded around her. At the gate her favourite animal awaited her ; a white ass, one of those which on account of his hue, was reserved for princes and nobles alone. This gentle creature was gracefully proportioned, its legs were long and slender, and its body covered with a coat of glossy silvery hair. Accompanied by Barak, and a train of followers, Deborah made a tour of the country ; exhorting the people to arise and go to battle against the King of Canaan. Her words and appearance, enabled her soon to assemble ten thousand men ; which was all she required. These she placed upon mount Tabor to lie in wait for the enemy.

According to her promise, Deborah drew Sisera and his troops to the foot of Mount Tabor. She caused the fact of the assembling of Israel to be told to Jabin, who sent Sisera with a large body of men towards the river Kishon. Deborah and Barak had in the mean while ascended Mount Tabor, where their men were concealed in the fort or among the groves, from the observation of the enemy.

Mount Tabor arose in an abrupt, cone-shaped hill, many hundred feet above the plain of Esdraelon—its sides were clothed with oaks and sycamores, and its summit crowned by a fortress. On the

walls of this fort Deborah stationed herself to look out for the enemy. Here the whole land of Israel seemed spread out before her. Below, she looked down upon the verdant plains of Galilee, watered by the Kishon and Jordan, and surrounded by a band of mountains ; while on one side glittered the sea of Galilee, and on the other stretched the bright waters of the great Mediterranean. The sun of that day, on which the Prophetess had predicted the approach of the Canaanites, was declining, when she descried their advance guard emerging from a defile between two of the hills bordering the Galilean sea. The plain was soon covered with their numerous host. Onward they came, band after band ; their iron chariots rumbling as the roaring of the great deep in a storm. At their head came Sisera. His chariot was overlaid with carved gold, and adorned with gay painting, while from each side projected a glittering scythe. Three white horses bore him swiftly on ; their backs covered with steel armor, and their heads decorated with a high ornament of feathers and painted leather. Sisera, a tall and powerful man, was standing in his chariot supported by his spear. His body was completely covered with a closely fitting suit of mail, formed of golden scales—a bow and quiver hung at his back ; a dagger in its brazen sheath was suspended

by chains from his crimson girdle ; while his head was protected by a helmet of leather wrought with gold. An armor-bearer sat at his feet, by the side of his charioteer, who bore his sword, and shield of leather, bound and studded with brass. Sisera encamped his band for the night on the banks of the Kishon, intending to attack the Israelites in the morning.

That night Deborah spent alone in the battlements, buried in meditation and prayer. Pious as she was, Deborah was mortal, and, as she reflected upon all she had done for the Israelites, and looked around upon the army she had collected, and on the ruined idol-fanes dimly visible in the moon beams, which at her command fell to the ground,—and thought upon the victory promised her, a feeling of triumph swelled her heart, and she forgot she was but an instrument in the hands of the Lord. “O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!” she said. “Sisera, thy hours are numbered! thou art mighty in men of war, and in chariots and horsemen, but our God hath spoken! and the horse and his rider will be overthrown this night. Thou shalt fall by the hand of a woman, and Deborah’s name shall resound in the land!” Deborah now sought out Barak—“Awake! Arise Barak!” said she. “Up!

for this is the hour when God deliver Sisera into my hands."

The Israelites were soon assembled in front of the fort. The priests then stood before them to address them according to the commands of Moses, 'When thou goest into battle before thy enemies O Israel!' they said, 'and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them! for the Lord thy God, is with thee, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.'

'Hear O Israel!' said another, 'ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies—let not your heart faint—fear not, and do not tremble! nor be terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight with you, against your enemies to save you.'

"Is there a man here," cried Barak advancing—"that hath built a new house and hath not dedicated it? Let him return to his house lest he die in battle and another dedicate it! Is there here a man who hath planted a vineyard and hath not eaten of it? Let him, also, return to his house lest he die in battle and another man eat of it! Is there here a man who hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him return to his house lest he die in battle and another man take her!"

"Is there a man here," cried Deborah, looking

upon the assembled band, "that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him return to his house lest he infect his brethren, and their heart be as faint as his." With one voice the people vowed to face the foe manfully; and were immediately led down the hill. In the dead midnight hour, the Canaanites were awakened from a sleep they had indulged in from contempt of their foe, by tremendous shouts. A terrible clangor of trumpets was in their ears; they arose in a fright, and in looking up beheld the lights the Israelites carried, which to their alarmed imaginations seemed stars descending from heaven upon them. A panic prevailed. "The stars are fighting against us!" they cried—"Hear the shouting of their angry God! Let us fly!" Sisera and some of his officers rallied their men, and led them against the Israelites. The little band was sorely oppressed; but God, who was fighting for them, now brought a new and terrible enemy against the Canaanites.

While engaged in combat they suddenly became aware they were standing in water. They looked around—it had risen to their knees—the chariots were filled and their ranks could hardly keep their feet. At once they rose a terrible cry. "The river! the river is rising! Fly ere ye perish!" The children of Israel had been early warned by their

Prophetess, and had retreated up the Mountain ; but the unhappy Canaanites, after struggling awhile with the waves, were, with all their mighty host, swept away and drowned.

Sisera fled in his chariot, but finding the waters rising fast, he abandoned it, and ran up a neighboring eminence. For many hours he wandered about, and when the day dawned, found himself at some distance from the scene of action. He was in the plain of Zaanim. Before him he beheld an encampment of tents, which, from their peculiar construction, he knew belonged to the Kenites, and he felt assured of safety. At the door of one stood a woman towards whom he ran for protection. Pursued by an avenging God, Sisera had been sent to the tent of his foe. It was the encampment of Heber the Kenite, whose family had joined the Israelites, and she to whom the marauder flew for safety was his bitter enemy Jael. She recognised him at once as the ravisher of her daughter, and the oppressor of Israel, and rejoiced to see him approaching.

“Turn in my lord ! turn in to me,” she said. He gladly entered, and threw himself exhausted upon a pile of mats which she spread for him.

“Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink,” he said, “for I am very thirsty.”

Jael opened a skin bottle and poured him out some milk, and gave him with it bread with butter in a dish of carved gold which her husband had taken in war. After he had eaten, she at his request threw over him a pile of clothes to conceal him from view.

“Stand in the door of the tent, good woman,” said Sisera, “and if any man doth come and enquire of thee ‘Is any man here?’ thou shalt say, ‘No.’ If I am saved this day it will go well with thee, for Jabin shall reward thee, and give thee a place in his palace. Then thou mayest rule the Israelite women, for there are many in our houses whom we have carried away captive!”

Jael, repressing the various emotions with which her bosom was bursting, when she saw her enemy in her power, now, in a voice of affected indifference, asked “Saw ye any thing my lord, of Zillah, a young girl, who was taken from the temple of Baal when the sacred oxen were carried away?”

“Aye, indeed—she is in my house, and is as goodly to look upon as the goddess Ashtaroth. When I left home, I made a vow to Moloch to sacrifice her, and several others at his altar, if he brought me safe to Hazor again.”

Jael rushed from the tent. “Now God I thank thee!” she cried, “that my enemy and Israel’s oppressor is in my power. Zillah, thou art saved! for

Sisera shall not return. In thy place he shall be sacrificed to the gods! Moloch! I devote him to thee! Baal! give strength to my arm! O Jehovah, pardon me! why call upon false gods? thou alone art the only true God, and now that thou hast given me my enemy in my hand, I will worship thee alone."

Jael returned to the tent and lifted up the curtain of the door-way. Her enemy was plunged in a deep slumber. Fearful some of his followers might wander there and rescue him from her hand, and knowing her daughter's life was the price of his safety, she resolved to put him to death, and thus render Israel free from one who had cruelly used them. She tore out one of the large nails with which the tent ropes are fastened to the ground, and with a hammer smote the robber on the head. In triumph Jael rushed from the tent—Barak was riding rapidly past.

"Ho! Barak!" she cried, "come, and I will shew thee the man thou seekest." Barak followed her into the tent, and beheld, dead before him, Sisera, the redoubtable oppressor of Israel. "Praises be to God!" he cried, "who hath this day subdued Jabin, King of Canaan, before the children of Israel! Truly did Deborah declare he should die by the hand of a woman. I thought the prophecy alluded

to her, but to Jael is this honor due. Come with me, that I may show Deborah and the Princes this thy noble act."

The next morning saw Deborah at the height of her glory and popularity. She was again seated under her palm tree, surrounded by the princes and nobles of Israel, who gave to her the honor of freeing Israel from their oppressors. Deborah's heart bounded, but checking all pride, she said—"Not to me,—not to Deborah be the glory, my lords; let us ascribe it all to our merciful Jehovah, of whom I am the humble instrument. But where is our good general Barak? Is he still in pursuit of Sisera?"

'Behold where he comes, followed by a train of people," said the Prince of Issachar. Deborah looked up, and beheld Barak approaching, leading Jael; both were crowned with garlands, followed by men bearing a corpse upon a bier, and women dancing, and singing triumphant songs.

"Behold the deliverer of Israel!" cried Barak. "Sing praises to Jael, for she hath slain Sisera, the enemy of Israel. Blessed above women be Jael the wife of Heber!"

Jael was hailed as Israel's avenger, by all the people, when the death of Sisera by her hand became known. For one moment a pang smote the heart of Deborah when she thus saw the glory given to

another, but she was a woman of too lofty a spirit, and devoted piety, to envy another. "I am punished," she said, "for my proud thoughts of yesternight." Throwing off all feeling save joy for the death of Sisera, she approached and greeted Jael, as a saviour in Israel. Then taking her timbrel, burst out in the following triumphant song:—

DEBORAH'S SONG.

Praise ye the Lord, he was Israel's avenger,
When the people came up in the face of the foe.
Hear, O, ye Kings! and give ear, O, ye Princes,
While my song to the praise of Jehovah shall flow.

Lord when thou wentest out of Seir and of Edom,
Earth trembled, the clouds and the heavens dropped
dew;

Mountains before thee were shaken and melted;
And veiled in her mists, Sinai shrank from thy view!

In the days of Shamgar, the bold son of Anak,
The highways were filled with our Canaanite foes:
The villages ceased, and the people were scattered;
When I, as a mother in Israel, arose.

They chose new gods, and our Lord sent them wars,
And Israel was rifled of spear and of shield;

Our rulers came forward and opened their stores,
And the riders of White Asses entered the field.

Ye, whom the enemy's archers have stricken,
The acts of our righteous Jehovah rehearse ;
He to our succor hath swiftly arisen,
And hurled at the foemen his withering curse.

Awake, awake Deborah ! wake thee and sing !
Arise, Barak ! son of Abinoam, rise !
To us hath dominion o'er Israel been given,
And I am the guide of the mighty and wise.

The children of Ephraim came to our aid,
And Machir, and Benjamin, also arose ;
The Princes of Issachar stayed not away,
And Barak, and Zebulun, fought with the foes.

The children of Reuben came not to the fight ;
Why did ye remain with your flocks and your herds ?
For Reuben's divisions were searchings of heart ;
And Asher and Dan, were both deaf to our words.

The kings came and fought,—the bold Kings of Canaan !

The stars were against them, and heaven their foe,
And Kishon, the river, that ancient of rivers,
Hath bidden his waves o'er their armies to flow.

Curse ye Meroz ! saith the angel of Heaven,
Who came not to Israel's help in his strait :
But blessed be Jael, the wife of the Kenite ;
Let her praises resound through the tent and the
gate !

He asked her for water, she gave him some milk ;
And brought in a lordly dish butter and bread ;
But the nail and the hammer were both in her
hand—

She struck the oppressor and smote off his head !

Lo ! on the ground he bowed down—he fell !
At her feet he bowed down, and lifeless he lies—
While his mother at home gazes out for her son,
‘ Why tarry his chariots ? ’ she mournfully cries.

“ Yea, have they not sped ? ” her ladies reply ;
“ Soon will they come, and each man for his spoil,
“ Will bring home a damsel or broidered robes,
“ Wrought with rich colors—reward for his toil.”

So let thy enemies perish Jehovah !
But thy people shine out as the sun in his might,
When he riseth and spreadeth his banner in heaven,
And Israel's children rejoice in his light !

THE MORAL.

One of the most striking features in the character

of Deborah, is her fearless avowal of the truth. While all the country was given up to idolatry, she upheld the religion of Jehovah. In the presence of the worshippers of Baal she was not ashamed to avow her own faith publicly, however unfashionable it had become ; but declared herself decidedly upon the Lord's side. Nor did she swerve from the duty of shewing them the error of their way but severely rebuked them for their wickedness. Let us endeavor to imitate her example, and when in the company of unbelievers testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, unabashed by sneers and unawed by persecution.

In judging the conduct of Jael, we must take into consideration the rude age in which she lived ; the commands which the Israelites had received to slay the Canaanites if they would preserve themselves ; and the danger in which the country stood should Sisera escape.

HEROISM OF RUTH.

“In Rama was there a voice heard—lamentation and weeping and great mourning—Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.” *Jeremiah*, xxxi. 15.

THERE was a voice of mourning in Moab. A young man revelling in the pride of youth and health, was suddenly cut down in his prime. Yesterday he trod the earth a bright and glorious creature—now he lies helpless and motionless upon his flower-strewn bier. Around him are weeping friends; and the wail of hired mourners is the only sound which disturbs the silence of the death chamber.

At the head of the bier sat a melancholy group—his aged mother Naomi and her daughters-in-law. The years of Naomi had been many, but the days of her pilgrimage had not been cloudless. Still, grief had not bowed her down. Many a lightning shock had struck her and strewed the leaves of her beauty and torn away her branches, but firm, and

trusting in her God she bent to the blast only to arise more erect than before.

Many years since a grievous famine drove her forth from her pleasant home in Bethlehem to seek subsistence beyond the Jordan; although leaving her home for a strange land the hope and courage of Naomi failed not, for her husband Elimelech, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion were with her. Elimelech being a man of rank, was well received by Eglon King of Moab, then ruler of Israel which he had lately conquered by his arms; who bestowed his young daughter Ruth upon Mahlon his eldest son.* Their happiness was short—Ehud dethroned Eglon—poverty and death overtook the family of Naomi. Her heart was filled with sharp anguish but she knew her king Jehovah had called her husband and son, and her loyal heart submitted without a murmur. Mahlon her last son now lies a corpse before her, but yet she sits erect beside it.

Cast upon the floor in anguish of soul, her head buried in her mother's lap, Ruth, the widow of Mahlon seems some tender flower, torn from its resting place, by cruel tempests, and clinging for support to the nearest thing. Orpah, widow of Chilion, sat on the other side of Naomi, wetting with her tears the

* Talmud.

long glossy tresses of the fair Ruth as she bent over to comfort her; or, looking up in wonder at the noble fortitude of the high souled Naomi.

Although Naomi bowed not at the storms of fate there was a blight at the core. She felt not her griefs the less that she gave them not utterance. 'The heart knows its own bitterness'—apparently calm she sat, beside the bier of her last cherished one, her eyes fixed upon the funeral linen which enveloped his body, but her thoughts were sad as they recurred to her early home, her beloved husband and darling boys. Happier days arose before her,—loved forms came to view, and voices of cherished lost ones were sounding in her ear. Mournful and lonely felt she then when the death trumpet summoning them forth aroused her, and the last link which bound her to earth, was torn away. Her heart yearned for her home and friends of other days, and she inwardly resolved to leave the land where she had suffered so much misery, and return to her loved Judea again.

A few days after the burial, a train of camels was seen winding up the side of a steep hill which arose on the confines of Moab. It was Naomi with her daughters-in-law wending their toilsome way to the land of Judea. The females alighted upon the sum-

mit, and while supper was preparing under the Oak trees, advanced to the brow of the hill to gaze around them. They looked upon a gloomy scene. Before them lay the dead sea, dark, stern, and motionless—none could look upon its cold, still surface without a shudder. Bare, jagged cliffs, and hills of everlasting granite, arose from its shores, shooting up their sterile peaks in every direction. Orpah, and the Princess Ruth gazed with sadness upon this desolate scene; but a mournful smile broke over the face of Naomi. “My daughters” she said, “behold the famed salt sea! and beyond the hills of Judea! my loved home I see thee at last! Now Lord, let thy servant die in peace!”

This distant glimpse of the land they had chosen for a home, was any thing but cheering to the forlorn young strangers; and turning from it with a sigh, they gazed out over the verdant plains of Moab adorned with the glittering waves of the silver Arnon; over rich vallies, noble temples, and cities now lighted up by the suns last rays.

“Oh Moab, my country!” cried Orpah, stretching her arms towards it, while tears rushed over her face—“beautiful Moab, I shall never see thee more! for the last time I gaze upon thy hills and palaces!”

Ruth gave not way to the passionate grief of her sister-in-law, but stood with her arms crossed in

resignation over her perfect form ; her lovely cheek pale with suppressed emotion, and her dark eyes fixed mournfully upon the home she had left, thus brightly contrasted with the one she was seeking.

Naomi gazed upon her daughters-in-law, and her heart reproached her for accepting their dutiful offer of accompanying her to Bethlehem. They were young and had many years of life and happiness before them ; why should she tear them from their home and friends to follow her footsteps to a strange land ? “ My daughters,” she said advancing toward them “ pardon the selfishness of age and sorrow. I have suffered my griefs so far to usurp all feeling—all thought—that not until now have I seen the extent of the sacrifice you are making, in leaving your homes to accompany me. Return beloved ones ere it be too late, each to her mother’s house ; there you will find wealth, and repose, while with me will be toil and care ;—and the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me !”

Ruth without speaking, threw herself into Naomi’s arms and wept. For one moment a flush of joy passed over the face of Orpah, but checking it she turned to her mother-in-law. “ Nay mother,” she said “ ask us not to leave thee, for thou art old and lonely, and we will return with thee to thy land.”

“ Not so my daughters. I have not many years

to live, but ye are young and should marry again. In a strange land, alone, what would ye do if I should die and leave ye. I have no more sons to give you to protect you when I am gone."

"Mother of my Mahlon!" said Ruth raising her head from Naomi's bosom where she had wept in silence—"Oh bid me not leave thee! with thee is every recollection of past happiness, past, never to return! I have gazed with thee on his form in its pride, and with thee have I wept in despair over his bier; can I then lose the light of that face and that voice which ever brings his remembrance to my heart?" The mother and widowed daughters lifted up their voices and wept. Soon, however, Naomi resumed her solicitations, and Orpah after many passionate adieus, turned from her lonely mother and sister, and departed—but Ruth clave to her. "Ruth my daughter," said Naomi mournfully, "behold thy sister-in-law hath returned to her people and her god; follow her then ere it be too late."

"Entreat me not to leave thee!" exclaimed Ruth, pressing her mother's hand to her lips—"whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge! Tell me not of my people and my god, for thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Mother! where thou diest I will die,

and there I will be buried—and the Lord judge me if aught but death part thee and me !”

Hour after hour passed away, and all were buried in sleep, except Naomi and her faithful daughter-in-law. Upon the brow of the hill they still remained in deep converse on high and holy matters ; for Ruth had asked her mother to instruct her in the faith of Israel.

Her memory stored with the traditions of her people, Naomi poured into the wondering ear of the young Moabite, the extraordinary history of her race. She spoke of the pure first pair—of their fall—of the tremendous deluge which swept away the earth’s inhabitants—of holy Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—of the dealings of God with the Egyptians, for the sake of his own peculiar people. She painted his love for them, which led them through the Red sea—their long and wandering journey—and told of holy Moses, who led them on their perilous way into the promised land which lay before them. When the heart of her young proselyte bounded with joy at the thought of being numbered with a people so favored by a powerful God, Naomi said —“ Nay fall not into that error which has been fatal to so many of our tribe. Jehovah is a God of love, and has showered down blessings upon us, and has

placed us in this lovely land, but presume not upon this love—forget not my daughter that he is also a God of justice, and spares not his own, even his chosen, when they offend. That dark and mysterious lake which lies below us, is an awful monument of his wrath. See, far ahead—around—its waters spread—all that waste space was once a lovely valley decked with many a city and goodly palace—now all is destroyed, by fire, and by rolling waves. Over its sombre silent waters never has vessel sailed or aught living passed; for, below in its vast depths those cities lie, strewn with the bones of their guilty dead. Old men have said that in their young days, those few who have been bold enough to penetrate the desert and barren rocks which bound its polluted shores, have dimly seen when the sun shone strong upon its surface, columns and roofs and porticoes far beneath.”

Ruth clung to Naomi's arm in silent dread. “Even his servant Moses God spared not. Moses his chosen leader of the Israelites once failed in his duty, and, as a punishment, was not suffered to enter the land of promise. Daughter, seest thou yon dark mountain, dusky Nebo, upon whose top daylight is just breaking? there Moses climbed and gazed upon the home of his people which he had so striven to reach, but which he was never to enter; and upon

that Jordan he was never to pass. How he must then have mourned that weakness, which, after all his toils, gave to another the glory and the victory. In the recess of that mountain Moses laid down and died."

"The God of Israel is a terrible God," whispered the awed Ruth.

"Only to those who err my child. Were we but farther on my journey, I could point thee out the spot where the pure remnant of our tribe reaped their reward. Oh could I but have beheld them as they crossed over Jordan! What a glorious sight my child! At God's command the waters parted—our priests led the way, bearing the holy Ark of the covenant, which in turns they supported as they stood in the river's bed until the people of Israel had passed. There were the sons of Levi in their snowy robes—the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manassah, armed for battle—the children of Issachar with their tents, and the sons of princely Joseph." "A wondrous show, indeed my mother."

"And when we shall pass the Jordan's bank I will point out the towers of ruined Jericho—what a glorious array was there my daughter! How must the hearts of its people have sank within them when they beheld our numerous host—our glittering warriors and train of priests bearing the Ark and other

symbols of our religion ! Seven days did the mighty host of Israel march in solemn silence around the devoted city—in silence unbroken, save by the trumpet's warning note. The funeral march and death trump ceased not until the seventh day—then one mighty shout went up from all the host, and with a sounding crash, the walls of Jericho lay low !—‘ Happy art thou O Israel ! who is like to thee ’ saith the holy Moses, ‘ O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellence—thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon high places.’

With mingled emotions of joy and sorrow Naomi stood upon the shores of Jordan. That stream so celebrated in the history of her nation, told of home and country. She remembered the day when she had passed it with her husband and children—but now she had returned old, poor and lonely. Repressing these feelings, she strove to cheer up Ruth—plucking for her the oleanders and myrtles with which its borders were adorned, and pointing out to her notice the broken walls and ruined fanes of Jericho ; never to be rebuilt under pain of God's curse. A dark spot were these gloomy ruins upon the fair plains stretching around it, now rich with ripened harvest, and gay with the bright anemone

and far famed Rose of Jericho. A toilsome journey among hills and ravines brought them in sight of Bethlehem. Yon green hill clothed with rich groves of olive trees, and crowned with graceful clusters of stately white buildings is indeed her home ; but where are those whose noble forms were at her side, when, ten years before she had left those walls ? The gate of Bethlehem was a noble structure, whose cool deep arch was the favorite resort of the citizens for the purpose of talking over the news of the day, or of gazing upon the travellers who passed through there. Some of the friends of the bereaved widow were then seated there, who gazed at her with earnest eyes as she rode along. Time and sorrow had done much to change her, but she was recognised at last. “ Naomi ! can it be ? ” they cried. “ Welcome, long lost Naomi—thy name speaks truly now for *pleasant* art thou to our sight once more.”

‘ Call me not *Naomi*, my friends,’ said the widow — ‘ call me *Mara*, for *bitterly* hath the Lord dealt with me. I went out full and the Lord brought me home empty. Why then call my name *Naomi*, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.’

Once more settled in her native home, the widow’s

humble calmness returned. Her friends were rejoiced to see her, and flocked around her, endeavouring to alleviate her sorrowful lot. The years of famine and trouble which they had seen, left them little to give—but her own, and Ruth's industry, placed them above want.

Without the city gate arose a lordly mansion, surrounded by fields and groves. This belonged to Boaz, a rich man, and relative of Elimelech the husband of Naomi. 'To him she purposed to apply should she need succor, but for the present her humble wants were fully supplied. During the time of barley-harvest Ruth observed her neighbours returning each evening laden with grain gleaned from the fields around—why should she not do the same and thus add to the comforts of her mother-in-law? It was true, her rank had prevented her from becoming familiar with these menial offices, but she had devoted her life to her mother, and determined to leave no efforts untried to soften her lot. Filled with these thoughts she sought Naomi. "Mother," she said, "I see my neighbors returning each evening laden with corn; let me, then, go into the fields, and glean after any one in whose eyes I shall find grace." "Go, my daughter," said Naomi, "and the Lord bless thy kind endeavors to lighten thy mother's cares."

The next day Ruth passed out of the gate, her

heart joyous with the idea of rendering her mother a service. It was a glorious morning, and one moment she stopped to gaze out upon the fair and extensive view spread beneath her. Over plain, hill, and vineyard the morning sun was glancing, but she turned from the beautiful picture and sighed, as her eye fell upon the gloomy waters of the Dead Sea, which lay darkly gleaming in the distance, for, beyond its rocky shores arose the hills of her own loved Moab. She turned hastily away and sought the nearest farm. It chanced to be the estate of Boaz, her husband's princely relative. Already were the reapers, each laden with a leathern bottle or gourd of water, hastening to their work ; and as they passed her, each turned to gaze upon her stately loveliness. Ruth enquired for the overseer, and proffered her humble request that she might glean in the fields that day. Pleased with her sweet gentleness he gave her the permission.

Soon after, the gates were thrown open, and Ruth, looking up from her work beheld a stately man approaching. His tunic of the softest wool, his crimson silk girdle richly embroidered with gold and with silver, and his mantle of the finest linen, proclaimed him a man of rank and wealth. It was Boaz, the owner of the farm. "The Lord be with you," he said to the reapers, as he passed. "The

Lord bless thee," they answered him. Advancing to the overseer he enquired into the state of the harvest, and merits of the reapers.

"I see my orders have been obeyed, and ye have many of the poor gleaning after you," he said.

"Ay, they know my lord's kindness," replied the overseer, "and flock hither in crowds. The praises of the generous Boaz are ever in their mouths."

"Nay, give God the praise," said the pious Boaz. "I but obey his words, given by his servant Moses, 'when ye reap the harvest of the land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of the field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God,' he saith. What lovely damsel is this who followeth the reapers?"

"It is Ruth the Moabitess, my Lord; daughter-in-law to Naomi,—a pious and worthy young woman, who, although her husband was dead, and all ties broken between them, yet left her home and friends to accompany her mother-in-law into a strange land, and since, hath been a daughter to her."

"Naomi! ah, I remember word was brought me the widow of my kinsman Elimelech had returned, but, the cares of the city, and other matters have driven it from my head. See to her well—let her glean among the reapers, for such piety deserves

reward. Let her not follow the men, for she is too lovely, but place her among my maidens." Ruth now approached, and Boaz called her to him.

"Hearest thou, my daughter?" he said, "wander not about the fields, but glean here in mine, and keep fast to my maidens. When thou art athirst ask the young men to draw for thee. I will speak to them that they treat thee well." Ruth, grateful and surprised for this notice from the master of the field, knelt at his feet and bowed her head before him, saying "How have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst thus kindly notice a stranger?"

"All thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband hath been fully shown me," said Boaz, "and how thou hast left thy father and mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come into a people thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast come to trust." The heart of the grateful Ruth swelled within her. "Let me always find favor in thy sight my lord," she said, "for thou hast comforted me and hast spoken friendly unto thy handmaid, although I be not one of thy maidens." "Come hither at meal-time," said Boaz, kindly, "and eat of my bread, and drink of our vinegar."

At midday the reapers all assembled to dinner, accompanied by Boaz. Ruth was called, and was served by the master of the farm, who gave her parched corn, bread, and vinegar with water, sufficient. When Boaz departed, he gave Ruth into the care of the overseer, with a charge to the reapers to leave a little for her to glean as she followed. In the evening all departed, and Ruth with them. She had beaten out her gleanings which amounted to a bushel of barley. Smilingly she shewed the treasure to her mother-in-law, who, in surprise, exclaimed, "Truly, thou hast been successful, my daughter! where wroughtest thou to day? Blessed be he who thus favored thee." "The name of the kind man in whose field I gleaned, was Boaz," Ruth replied. "Blessed be the Lord who hath not ceased his kindness to the living and the dead," said Naomi. "The man is a near kinsman to us Ruth." "He will extend his kindness," said her daughter, "for he bid me continue with his people until the end of harvest." Keep, then, with his maidens, Ruth, and wander not in other fields. The Lord will reward thee, my child, for thy industry and thy piety."

The words of Ruth awakened a new hope in the aged widow's heart. A way was opened, she trusted, to better the condition of the virtuous Ruth, and reward her for all her kindness. She remembered

the law of Israel, which, when a man dies, obliges the next of kin to marry his widow and raise up an heir for his brother's name and estate. Naomi had never hoped the lofty Boaz would marry the humble Moabite, as, if it were demanded he might escape by paying the penalty; but now his great kindness to Ruth had inclined her to believe the beauty and virtue of her daughter-in-law had made an impression upon him, which would render him willing to accept her.

Her views were explained to Ruth, who agreed to follow the directions of her mother, as she at once saw how much it would better the condition of Naomi should her wealthy kinsman take her to wife. The repugnance she felt to banish her loved Mahlon from her heart, and take another in his place, was not for a moment cherished; for, when the heroic Ruth resolved to leave her home and friends to comfort the declining years of her husband's mother, she inwardly vowed her own wishes could never be placed in opposition to those of Naomi.

"Our kinsman Boaz winnoweth barley, to night, at the threshing floor" said Naomi to Ruth. "Wash thyself, therefore, anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee and get thee down to the threshing floor; make not thyself known to him until he hath done

eating and drinking ; when he lieth down, mark the place, and when he is asleep, lift up the mantle which covers him and lie down at his feet under cover. In our nation it is a token thou claimest the fulfilment of the law and his protection.

“ All that thou biddest me I will do,” said the obedient Ruth “ for on thy judgment I place implicit reliance.”

That evening Ruth took her way to the farm of Boaz. The threshing floor was a large level space in the field, surrounded by low walls and barns. It was now piled with grain, among which the reapers were busy, some driving oxen, others beating it out with a flail, or tossing it on high that the wind might blow away the chaff, while the grain fell in a heap on the ground. Boaz was there directing, and occasionally assisting his men. At night-fall they all partook of a feast together, master and men. When all were satisfied, they departed, some to their houses in the city, some to rest among the straw under the wide spreading trees. Boaz had eaten and drank, for his heart was merry while thus feasting with his men, and being weary, he threw himself upon a heap of straw and spreading his large mantle over him was soon asleep. Ruth, who had been concealed now approached. She feared not to follow her mother's directions, for she knew the wise Naomi

understood the customs of Israel well. Softly she came, and lifting his linen mantle, laid herself down beneath its folds. At midnight, Boaz, in turning himself, awoke and discovered a woman at his feet—a woman who evidently had a claim upon him, for she had sought the protection of his mantle. “Woman! who art thou?” he exclaimed in surprise and dread.

“I am Ruth thy handmaid,” she answered. “Spread therefore thy skirt, over me, for thou art the nearest kin to my husband.”

When Boaz became aware it was the lovely and virtuous Ruth who thus sought him as a husband. his heart warmed towards her. His gratitude was great that she had preferred him, almost double her age, to the many young men who admired her.

“Blessed be thou, my daughter,” he said “for thou hast shewn more judgment and kindness in thy latter end than at the beginning, as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich. Now my daughter fear not, I will do all thou requirest me, for I am thy near kinsman, and all the city dost know thou art a virtuous woman. Still Ruth, there is a nearer kinsman than I, whom thou knowest not; tarry this night, and in the morning I will speak with him, and if he will perform unto thee a kinsman’s part, and take thee to wife, it is well; let him do a

kinsman's part according to law ; but if he will not perform his duty to thee, then will I, as the Lord liveth ! Lie down until morning."

Ruth laid quietly at her kinsman's feet until day-break, when she gently arose to withdraw. Boaz, who was awake, called to her. "Hold out thy veil, and take a measure of barley," he said, "Go not empty to thy mother-in-law."

Ruth was enveloped in a large linen wrapper, used as a veil, one end of which she held out, while her generous relative poured into it six measures of barley. Then, receiving his blessing, she hastily returned home.

The hope of obtaining the beautiful and virtuous Ruth for his wife, so animated Boaz, that he took measures to have the business settled immediately. That day he appointed ten of the elders of Bethlehem, to meet him at the city gate. It was the hour when he knew the other kinsman of Elimelech would be there. He had saluted the elders, and they had taken their seats when the kinsman appeared. "Ho, Peloni ! turn aside and sit down here," cried Boaz. He obeyed the call, supposing some business was to be transacted, and seated himself in front of Boaz beside the elders. Boaz addressed him thus.

"Naomi, who has lately returned from the land of

Moab, intends selling a lot of ground which belonged to her husband, our kinsman Elimelech. Thou art nearest of kin, and I thought thou wouldst like to purchase it, that it go not into a stranger's hand. If thou wilt redeem it, it is well; if not, I, who am next of kin to thee, will redeem it." The kinsman, after thanking Boaz, declared himself willing to take it. Boaz had hoped he would refuse, and thus let the matter be settled. He said—"With this land goes an incumbrance, if I may so call it—for with it, thou must take Ruth the Moabite, as this land was inherited by her husband, Mahlon, since dead; thou must take her to raise up an heir to inherit Mahlon's land, according to our Jewish law." "Nay, that I cannot do," said the kinsman, "lest I mar my own inheritance by bringing in a wife and more children to maintain. I give thee my right as next of kin, for I cannot redeem it."

Boaz willingly agreed to take the land and Ruth. In fulfilment of the law used on all such occasions, he plucked off his kinsman's shoe, in token he took from him the inheritance. Then turning towards the elders, and people who were gathered around, he said with a loud voice—"All ye assembled here, are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all Chilion's, and all Mahlon's of the hand of Naomi; moreover, Ruth, the Mo-

abitess, the widow of Mahlon, have I taken to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that his name be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his city. Ye are witnesses this day !”

The elders, and assembled people answered, “ Yea, we are witnesses !”

When all were silent, one of the elders spake in a solemn voice—“ The Lord make this woman, that is come into thy house, like Rachel, and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel ; and do thou worthy in Ephratah, and be faithful in Bethlehem ; and let thy house be like the house of Phazer of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.”

Then did the heart of the aged Naomi rejoice ! once more she hoped to see her children around her, and the joy of her youth renewed.

Ruth was married to Boaz, and lived a long and happy life with her husband and mother. All that wealth and affection could bestow was lavished upon the aged Naomi. Her ardent wish to behold a child of Ruth, and heir of Mahlon, was gratified, for a son was born to Ruth. The neighbors of Naomi gathered about her to offer their congratulations. “ Blessed be the Lord,” they said, “ who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, and

that his name may be famous in Israel. He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and nourisher of thy old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, and who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him."

Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became its nurse.

Thus did the virtuous Ruth reap the reward of her heroic sacrifice of home and country, to solace the declining years of her aged, poor, and afflicted mother-in-law. She partook of the promise made to Abraham, and in her seed were all the nations of the earth blessed. From her were descended David the king; a man after God's heart—Daniel; beloved of the Lord—and above all, our blessed Saviour, according to the flesh, Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

THE MORAL.

The beauty of filial piety is brightly portrayed in the character of Ruth. It was no light thing to leave home, and friends, to accompany an old woman to a strange land; and to devote her time, and her young days to the task of soothing the declining years of desolate old age. Born to princely rank, according to the Jewish Rabbis, she refused no menial service, not to glean with the poor in the

fields, in order to add to the comforts of her sorrowing mother-in-law. With what gentle obedience she obeyed her every command!—She undertakes at her bidding the difficult and delicate task of reminding Boaz of his duties towards her as her kinsman. This conduct appears in our age very singular and questionable, but we must remember the customs and laws of the Israelites were very different from our own, and that which seems improper in this day was then most commendable. May we all look upon our female aged relatives with the kindness of the pious and humble Ruth.

HEROISM OF QUEEN ESTHER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANQUET.

“Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointment : Let no flower of the spring pass by us : Let us cover ourselves with rose-buds ere they be withered.”—*Wisdom of Solomon.*

'Twas night in Persia. Elam's burning god had passed to other lands, leaving his starry train “to rule the night.” Arcturus and all his sons were out—Orion and the Pleiades, shedding soft brilliancy over many a perfumed vale, mountain and desert lone. Gently their rays were flung over the stately city of Susa, and fairy gardens of the Royal Palace. Here, flowers, rare and lovely, were giving forth their fragrance to the night. Myriads of roses, jas'mines, myrtles and sweet oleander—glowing pomegranate, almond, graceful chinar and citron, were gathered in gorgeous groups, or bending over the silvery and gushing fountains.

A royal banquet hall arose in this sweet Eden. Gorgeous in its magnificence, it was worthy its royal master. The floor was a rare mosaic of marble and porphyry and alabaster, which gave it the glow of a rich painting. Pillars of marble encircled the apartment, suspended to which by silver rings were hangings of rich stuffs, of white and green and scarlet, looped up with silver cords. A table in the form of a crescent occupied the centre of the room, covered with every rare viand and delicious fruit, with delicately sculptured vases and cups of gold and silver set with precious stones; bearing the most exquisite wines of Helbon and Damascus, the sweet water of Choaspes, sacred to the royal table.

Around this luxurious board, reclining upon silver couches covered with purple cushions, where the chief nobles of the court of Artaxerxes. In the centre was the monarch, arrayed in robes of scarlet and purple, adorned with gold and jewels, and wearing the royal tiara, of cloth of silver and purple silk twisted, which bore a short plume, erect in front. Next the king, sat his seven counsellors, the heads of the seven noblest families in Persia, descendants of the conspirators against the usurper, Smerdis, the Magian, and privileged, in memory of the confusion of that hour, to wear the plumes which decorated their white linen turbans, *a-slant*.

A dazzling light was thrown over the richly laden table by silver chandeliers, while the hall resounded with music and merry laughter. This was the seventh day of the royal feast—a feast given by the king to all his officers and nobles, in commemoration of the peace which his unremitted efforts had procured to the one hundred and twenty provinces of his vast kingdom. Silence was commanded at the table, and the king spoke :

“This is the last day of the feast, my lords,” he said, “let it in joy and mirth exceed the rest. Stint not the wine, ’tis parent of wit and merriment. And yet I would not force your will—let it be the law of our feast that none drink in courtsey more than it pleasureth him.”

Loud applauses followed this gracious address from their monarch—the golden flagons were replenished, and jeweled cups flashed in the light.

“Still it becometh not me,” continued the king, “to argue in the praise of wine, for what sayeth the writer,* ‘It reduces the king, the infant, the poor and rich, to one level. It maketh the heart so joyous that monarchs and governors are no longer feared—the love of friends and kindred is forgotten, and swords are often drawn between them.’”

“Bravely hath my lord spoken of wine,” said his favorite, Mamucan, who sat next to him; “it is truly a potent thing, and readily masters man, the lord of the earth. But, if I dared hazard an opinion, there exists a more powerful thing than wine.”

“What may that be, Mamucan?” said his royal master. “Say on!”

“It is *the king*,” said the favorite. “Man is lord of the earth, you say; he planted the vineyard and maketh the wine, and doth not the king command all men? If he command to kill, they kill; if he command to spare, they spare; If he bid them to go to war, to break down mountains, walls, and towers, it is done; if he command to make desolate, to build, to cut down, to plant, man obeyeth him. Confess, then, all ye who hear me, that the king is the most powerful thing in the world.”

“Yes, wine is strong and the king is strong, but I know what excelleth both in power,” said prince Admath.

“Speak on,” said the king.

“It is *woman*, my lord. If mankind rule the world, doth not woman rule him? He that planteth the vine, and the king who commandeth sea and land, owe their existence to her. A man leaveth his mother and country for his wife. For her he will hold as dust all gold and gems and every pre-

cious thing of the earth. Will not a man labor more faithfully for the woman of his love than for his king? Yea, he will rob, and spoil, and brave the dangers of the sea, the fury of lions and the terrors of darkness, to gain treasure to lay at a woman's feet! Men have lost their wits, have become slaves, have sinned and have perished for woman's sake. Even the king, commander of the earth does not he in turn obey a woman? Have I not seen his fair slave, Apamé, sitting beside him on the throne, taking the crown from his august head to place upon her own?—nay, even strike the monarch unchidden! Have I not seen him fear her anger, and even flatter to be received into favor again? Then acknowledge, O king! and ye, O lords! that woman hath more power than wine or the king.”

Universal applause crowned the orator who had so skilfully advanced the claims of the female sex to sovereignty. He was declared conqueror in the debate, and the sparkling cups were once more filled high to the honor of woman. A momentary silence succeeded the clamor, during which a deep sigh was heard in the apartment. All started at this unusual sound in the banquet hall, and the king, turning, beheld beside him his cup-bearer, a Hebrew captive, who stood with his arms folded in his linen mantle, his eyes fixed pensively on the ground,

and his whole figure so expressive of mournful musing, as to present a complete contrast to the merry and gaily dressed courtiers.

“How now, Nehemiah?” said the king, “why art thou so sad? Why this heart sorrow when all are so gay?”

“Let the king live for ever!” said the captive Hebrew; “and let my lord not rebuke me, for why should not my countenance be sad when the place of my fathers’ sepulchre lieth waste, and the gates are consumed with fire?”

“Nay, do not mar our joy by thy gloom. Cheer up, Nehemiah—come, tell us which thou thinkest the strongest in the world—wine, the king or woman?”

“They are all excellent in strength, my lord; but, O king, there is something more powerful than these!” said the Hebrew.

“And what may that be?” asked the king, smiling to the courtiers, who all looked forward, expecting some amusement at the captive’s reply.

“*Truth* is stronger,” replied the Hebrew. “Earth and Heaven bow to the power of Truth. In wine, and the king, and woman, is error and death; but truth endureth always, and conquereth for evermore. True is the earth to her seasons, and swift and true the stars in their course. In the judgment of Truth

there is no unrighteousness ; but the children of men are wicked. Truth is the strength, and kingdom, and power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth !”

The Hebrew was silent ; a sudden awe fell upon the assembly, and they exclaimed, as if with one voice—“ Great is Truth and mighty above all things !”

“ Well hast thou spoken, Hebrew,” said the king. “ I here pronounce thee conqueror in this our argument, and will give thee any boon thou shalt ask !”

The Hebrew, with a silent ejaculation to his God, knelt before Artaxerxes. “ If it please thee, O, king !” he said, “ let me be sent to Judea with power to rebuild our holy temple, and the God of Truth shall bless thee evermore !”

“ Thy request is granted. Remind me of this tomorrow, and I will write the fitting orders.”

With many thanks, and a heart filled with gratitude to God, the Hebrew fell back behind his beneficent master.

“ The Hebrew is wise,” said the king ; “ but he has thrown a shade over our mirth. Come, fill up, my lords—let us drink to woman. I give you the fairest in Persia, Queen Vashti !”

When they had drank, Prince Mamucan observed : “ We drink to her beauty, my lord, upon our

faith in your taste ; for the lovely queen hath never blest our eyes."

"'Tis true," said the king ; " but you shall judge for yourselves. I will force you to acknowledge her preeminence. Bid the Lord Chamberlain appear !"

In the bustle of his entrance, Prince Carshena whispered into the ear of Mamucan : " What have you done, prince ? You have sealed your own ruin ! The queen, already your enemy, will be incensed against you for suggesting this to the king, and she will leave nothing undone to work your wo. Nay, when the effect of the wine is over, the king will see his error, and you will be sacrificed to appease her."

" You are short-sighted, Carshena," said the prince, coolly. " Do you not see I am planning her downfall instead of my own ? Since she prevailed upon the king to give the government of Sardis, for which I sued, to her favorite, Haman, I have vowed her destruction. Fate now serves me. I have not worshipped Ahrimanes in vain. Vashti will refuse to come, for her spirit is high—the king will be enraged, and I will so work upon his anger that she will be degraded from her ill-deserved state."

" Repair to the Women's Court," said the king to his lord chamberlain, who stood before him. " Bid

Queen Vashti appear in her royal robes, with the crown upon her head, that all may behold her beauty and confess my taste unquestioned."

The chamberlain bowed and departed. Passing through the starlit garden, whose fresh air and sweet odors were grateful after breathing the heat and fumes of the banquet hall, he was admitted through a large gate into a marble court, with its usual adornment of a whispering fountain and vases of rare flowers. Around this were built the rooms appropriated to the women of the palace. A large saloon fronted the gate, from which echoed the silvery laugh and melodious tones of female voices.

Here Queen Vashti held a feast to the ladies of the court, and the wives of those princes who sat at the king's table. The walls of this apartment were richly painted, or adorned with delicate flower-work, carved in cedar and brightly gilded. Gorgeous Babylonian carpets were spread upon the marble floor, and the softened light of alabaster lamps, reflected from silver mirrors, threw a gentle moon-like radiance over the room and its fair young group.

A circle of ladies surrounded a table upon which was placed all that could tempt a fastidious palate. Grapes, and wine, and pomegranates, Arabian dates, and all that was rare and delicious was before them.

Upon a raised seat sat Queen Vashti. Tall and commanding, she looked the sovereign. Her dress was of golden tissue, while from the royal tiara glittering with jewels, fell a rose-colored veil spotted with gold.

When the chamberlain entered, she started in angry surprise. "What means this intrusion upon our privacy?" she said haughtily.

The lord chamberlain, with a lowly obeisance, delivered the king's command for her to appear before the princes in the banquet hall. The queen gazed upon him a moment in silence, while her brilliant eyes flashed fire, the color grew deep upon her cheek, and her bosom was stirred with powerful emotion.

"Do I hear you aright, my lord?"

"You do, most royal lady. The king expects you."

"Is the king mad?" she cried with a burst of wrath, for her spirit was out in all its power. "What! doth he bid me, the queen! descend from her state, to appear in the midst of a drunken revel? Doth he bid a delicate lady come forth from her privacy to submit to the wanton gaze of his idle, half-inebriated courtiers! Return, my lord—there is some mistake in this." And the self-willed lady drew her veil around her and resumed her seat,

panting with all the anger of outraged dignity and womanly delicacy.

“Nay, royal Vashti, hear me,” said Harbona. “It is the king’s command, and I dare not return without the queen.”

“How! do ye stand arguing with me thus, as if ye deemed I would obey this insolent command!” and the diamonds in her tiara flashed not more vividly than the eyes of the ireful queen, while gazing upon the trembling eunuchs.

“You will not thus rebel against—” began Abagtha, but he was cut short by the enraged queen—rising from her seat, her glittering robes falling around her.

“Begone, slave!” she cried, stretching her hand majestically towards him; “begone! and tell your king *I will not come!*”

The chamberlain turned and immediately quitted the saloon. A great commotion succeeded his departure. Some gentle spirits shrank aghast at the daring of the queen; but there were many there who applauded her lofty resolution.

“What, ladies!” exclaimed the princess Roxa, wife of Mamucan; “shall we be abject slaves to our husbands? Shall they dare, when they may choose it, to drag us from our retirement? Shall we have no reserves, no rights uninvaded? Let us

all imitate the strength of mind of our royal mistress, and resist all unlawful usurpations, if we would have any freedom left !”

The noble Roxa is right,” said Princess Zeresh. “As it is, we have not sufficient liberty. In other lands, woman is free to walk out, or attend assemblies of both sexes, when she pleases, while we are shut up in our tiresome abodes, and watched and guarded like children. If our royal mistress had given way to this lawless encroachment of our rights, it would have become a precedent, and our lords would be sending for us, like slaves to amuse their drunken companions !”

The fair orators were applauded, and encouraged by the example of their queen, high resolves were passed to resist their husbands’ orders when not agreeable, and even to demand from them more freedom. These wise observations were unheeded by the queen. She sat wrapped in her veil, plunged in deep thought, her bosom agitated with a variety of emotions. Now regretting, now applauding, her refusal to obey the king. She listened intently, expecting the return of the chamberlains, or some other indications of the result of the step she had taken ; but nothing was heard except the chatting of her guests—and, exhausted with the violence of her emotions, she dismissed the ladies and retired.

With trembling lips the chamberlains bore to the king his queen's refusal to appear before him. The wrath of the king was loud and deep. "She refuses to come!" he exclaimed. "Is my royal will disputed? Am I bearded by a subject in my own palace?"

Harbona advanced to allay the king's anger, and spoke so judiciously of woman's rights and immunities, that his ire began to cool. This suited not the views of Prince Mamucan, and he sought to keep alive the wrath of the king.

"Truly, a fine example of obedience to our wives!" he said, with a sneer, to Carshena, but loud enough to be heard by the king. "I should not wonder if this breed a revolt in the Seraglio, and in future we shall be obliged to obey the women!"

"By Ahrimanes! you speak the truth, Mamucan," said the king, his anger reviving. "If I submit to this I may never hope to rule my women again. What shall we do, princes, to punish the refractory woman?"

There was silence in the banquet hall—each one fearing to hazard an opinion on this delicate subject, lest the king should in future regret any harsh measures he had undertaken at their suggestion—interfering between man and wife being proverbially

dangerous. The wily Mamucan was the first to speak.

“If my lord, the king, will listen to the advice of his servant,” he said, humbly, “no trifling punishment will have any affect. The women will all, no doubt, presume upon the daring of their mistress and give us trouble, and nothing will strike terror into their souls and reduce them to obedience, except the queen be *repudiated*.”

The nobles were astonished at the boldness of Mamucan, and even the king seemed staggered at the proposal.

“Believe me, my lord,” continued the prince, following up the blow; “it is the only measure to pursue. You may never hope to bend the lofty spirit of Vashti, and your other women, taking example by her disobedience, will break all rule, and cost you much trouble to bring them again into subjection. Vashti, the queen, hath not only done the king wrong, but hath stricken at the peace of the princes and people of Persia and Media; and, in their name, I demand this sacrifice? When this deed of the queen’s shall be noised abroad, will not the women reply to their husbands’ commands—‘The king cannot force the queen to obey him, and shall we obey you?’”

Still the king answered not. Several others now

spoke, whose wives the haughty queen had offended, or whose views she had thwarted; recommending the king to turn Vashti away and take a more pliant wife.

“This is good advice,” said Carshena, willing to do his friend, Mamucan, a service. “Let the king take a more blooming maiden. Queen Vashti is old and her temper soured, a younger and fairer queen would be more gentle and obedient.”

Others seeing the king's eyes sparkle at the thought now warmly advocated the measure, each recommending some young beauty to the king's notice. - This advice was well received by the king; and requesting his Seven Counsellors to meet him the next day, he dismissed the assembly.

CHAPTER II.

THE CANDIDATES.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.”—*Proverbs*, xxxi. 10.

Soon a decree went forth into all the hundred and twenty provinces over which Artaxerxes reigned, written in the various languages of the many nations

there congregated, that Vashti, the queen of Persia was repudiated for refusing to comply with the king's commands. It further declared that, under penalty of the like fate, all women are commanded to obey their husbands, that every man might rule in his own house.

This decree was enrolled among those laws of the Medes and Persians that were voted *unalterable*. It was further commanded that the fairest maidens of the land should be brought to the palace of Artaxerxes, in Susa, that the king might choose another queen. The fate of Vasthi was thus soon decided; and she was sent from the palace in disgrace. Her followers, the revolutionary chieftainesses, lowered their standards in token of submission, and silence and fear reigned in the Women's Court.

How gentle a touch will sometimes set in motion the machinery of the world! These events, apparently unimportant except to the actors, were big with the fate of the Jews who were spread over Persia and Media. The refusal of a Persian queen to obey her husband, prevented the massacre of thousands of innocent persons, for it produced her removal from the throne, and placed upon it a Hebrew maiden. Will the scoffer at an especial Providence, read this, and not trace in it the finger of God? In His hand are the hearts of princes. He

guides them to the accomplishment of his purposes. His "peculiar people" were not forgotten. Lost, degraded, rebellious as they were, He still watched over them with a parent's care. He willed not their total destruction, and "shortened those days" of death and sorrow for Abraham's sake, from whom they sprang, and for His sake who should spring from them.

In the suburbs of the city of Susa, by the river's side, and concealed from view by a grove of stunted cypresses, stood a lone hut, formed of mud which was hardened in the sun, and thatched with date-leaves. Here resided Mordecai, once a man of wealth in Judea, but subsequently carried captive to Babylon with his King Jaconiah, when the country was conquered by Nebuchodnossor. Mordecai now gained a scanty subsistence by laboring in the city, and lived in this retired spot in order to escape notice. When the news of the king's decree reached him, his heart bounded with joy. He now saw a way open for the advancement of his people, and with many a silent prayer and ejaculation of praise, he sought his home. The hut of Mordecai, wretched as it was in appearance, contained a jewel of inestimable value. Here dwelt a Jewish maiden of rare beauty, who, upon the death of her father, was left to the care of her uncle Mordecai. Determin-

ed to place his peerless niece upon the list of virgin candidates, he lost no time in seeking her. As he approached her apartments, he heard her voice accompanied by the Psaltery. She was singing a mournful song, written by the Prophet Jeremiah, telling of the sorrows and wrongs of her country.

How lonely sitteth Zion now !

How mournful and how desolate !

As some sad widow o'er whose brow,
Stern sorrow rules in gloomy state.

She who was princess o'er the land,
And saw proud nations own her sway,
Now seeks in vain some pitying hand
Her weary, faltering steps to stay.

There is no feasting in her hall—
There is no laughter in the street
Her maidens sigh in captive thrall—
Her friends are scattered ne'er to meet.

“Nay, Hadassah!” cried Mordecai, bursting in, “cease thy mourning and sing a song of joy and thanksgiving. The Lord will have pity upon Judah, and Israel will again flourish as the cedar of Lebanon!” Hadassah gazed with surprise in her uncle’s face. He was completely changed. No longer dejected and mournful, he was now joyous and triumphant.

“What hath thus excited thee, my uncle?” she asked. In an exulting tone, he related the disgrace of Vashti, and the king’s command that the fairest virgins should be brought to the palace, that the king might choose from them a queen. “And where shall he find a fairer than my Hadassah!” exclaimed her uncle. “Where is there a skin of more delicate tint? where a more glowing cheek? where more lustrous eyes and glossy hair, or more stately form?”

Hadassah sank into a seat, and the boasted glow faded from her cheek.

“Why, how now, silly maiden!” said Mordecai, “why is this; wilt thou not be a queen!”

“Alas, no, uncle,” she said. “Spare me this trial. My spirit shrinks from the giddy height you bid me attain. What! leave my dearest uncle—my quiet home, and mingle with the corrupt and gilded slaves of a court?”

“I looked not for this aversion, Hadassah! Hast thou no ambition? Think what it is to be the bride of a monarch! to outshine all the maidens of this vast land!”

“Uncle! would thou have me wed the uncircumcised! the enemy of our faith and oppressor of our people! It cannot be that thou shouldst counsel this, mine uncle!”

“It is for thy faith, and for thy people I would ask it. Thou art an instrument of the Lord for the salvation of Judah! A Jewish maiden upon the throne, and the horn of Judea will be once more exalted. In my soul I feel thou wilt be the chosen of the king; and then what power will be thine! The injuries and extortions inflicted on our race, will cease, and we shall obtain instead, benefits,—perchance release from captivity. Arouse thee, Hadassah! Jehovah sends thee forth to save thy people? Like Deborah, and Judith, thou wilt stand forth in our annals as a saviour of our country. What! a Hebrew maiden, and refuse to obey her God!”

The gentle maiden had always looked upon Mordecai as her father, and obeyed his commands without a murmur—now urged by him, and called of God as she imagined, she no longer resisted, but sacrificing her private feelings, placed her fate in his hands.

“Tis well, my child,” said her uncle, fondly. “I will immediately take measures for thy appearance in the palace. But let me impress upon thee, my daughter, the necessity of concealing thy faith and nation, or thou wilt not be received among those who despise us. No longer, *Hadassah*, my Hebrew

myrtle, thou must now be a Persian *Star*, for in future I will call thee *Esther*."

The next day Mordecai sought Hegai, the lord Chamberlain, in whose care the candidates were placed. Concealing his relationship, he told him of a jewel "worth all her tribe," of whose abode he was acquainted, and offered to lead her to him, when he might judge if she were fit to enter the ranks of the candidate maidens. Hegai appointed a time and place for the meeting, and the sanguine Hebrew spent his last beral in purchasing rich robes to deck his favorite. The day arrived, and Mordecai led Esther into the room where Hegai awaited them, and throwing off the veil which covered her person, gazed triumphantly into the face of the eunuch. And seldom was there a veil withdrawn from before so perfect a form and face. Clad in graceful robes, her rich, dark hair confined with a lustrous band of diamonds, her large, soft eyes, full of elevated thought, fixed firmly on the chamberlain—her whole figure expressive of majesty of soul, and lofty resolve mingled with sweet gentleness, burst with such sudden surprise upon Hegai, that he felt she must be the chosen of the king, and by a superior power, he bent his knee as if in presence of a queen. Mordecai watched with rapture the effect of her charms, and giving her in Hebrew a last

charge to conceal her religion, and stand firm in the cause of the Lord to which she was called, he threw the veil again over her, and consigned her to the hands of the lord Chamberlain. Placed in the woman's court, Esther, with the other maidens, underwent the purification required by the king;—six months with the oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors. The heart of Hegai was turned by the Lord towards the gentle Esther, and he placed her in the richest rooms, gave her seven attendants, and rendered her every kindness and advantage. To him, Esther spoke in favor of Mordecai, who, in consequence, received the post of porter to the king's gate. This gave him access to the palace, and he walked every day before the women's court to obtain from the slaves information of his cherished niece. The time of purification over, each maiden was led by turns into the presence of Artaxerxes. Many a lovely maiden was there of every nation. Bright glowing creatures from the gardens of Indus, the shores of the Caspian, and Araby's sandy plains—from Babylon and Nineveh and Ecbatana—gay in attire, and smiling with hope they went forth, but returned, their fair brows clouded with the chilling consciousness they had not won the king. Esther's turn came at last, and as clad in rich garments, she stood in her radiant and peerless beauty, awaiting to

be conducted to the monarch, the assembled candidates knew their hopes for the throne was over.

The eunuch arrived and gazed with delight upon his beauteous charge, for she had so won upon him by her gentle loveliness, that he felt a father's interest in her. He took her small white hand in his, and led her into the presence of Artaxerxes. Like the evening star she beamed upon the king, all brilliancy and softness. The monarch raised her as she knelt before him. "Bring hither no more maidens, Hegai," he said, gazing with ecstasy upon the lovely Esther—"this is my queen—earth can give no fairer!"

The important news soon flew over the palace and city. Esther was chosen queen, and the royal crown was placed upon her head. Mordecai retired to his humble dwelling and spent the day in prayer and thanksgiving to God for this signal favor, and to mourn the loss of his gentle Hadassah.

CHAPTER III.

THE FALLEN QUEEN.

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout,
So is a fair woman without discretion."—*Proverbs*, xi. 22.

IN a large saloon, paved with marble, and lined

with Lydian tapestry, belonging to a noble house of Susa—her face buried in the satin cushions upon which she lay, was a lady indulging in all the abandonment of violent grief. A man richly clad stood in front of her, his arms folded in his purple mantle, gazing in silent contempt upon the agonized female before him.

“And this is the haughty Vashti!” he said at last. “This weak, weeping woman is the daring spirit which ruled the court of Artaxerxes!”

“Rail on, my brother,” said the unhappy lady, raising to his, a face whose glorious beauty was dimmed with tears. “Your scorn, your contempt, can arouse me no more. My spirit is broken, my pride is gone, and the empress is lost in the woman.”

“Can it be possible you loved this man!”

“Yea, Haman, with all the fire of my nature!”

“Then why not obey him? Why accuse fate for your misfortune when you have carved out your own destiny? Proud and unbending, you offended the princesses, and made enemies of the nobles of your court, and could not curb your indomitable spirit even for the crown of Persia!”

The sorrow-stricken queen offered no reply to her brother's cruel reproaches, but too much exhausted even to weep, with closed eyes she leaned heavily back against the cushions; her rich, dark hair no

longer confined by the royal tiara, fell in disorder around her, and her long lashes lay upon a cheek of marble paleness. Haman walked impatiently about the saloon.—“So well had I planned,” he said—“so long and cunningly worked to place you upon the throne, and now to have my nicely-reared fabric overthrown by your impatient spirit, is enough to drive me mad! There is, however, one thing left, *vengeance!*” Vasthi started, and pressed her hands firmly upon her heart. “Yes, vengeance, sister! Wouldst thou not smile to see him low who wronged thee?”

“Oh, that I could tear this weakness from my heart!” exclaimed Vashti, passionately, “but, Haman! harm him not! I could curse myself for it, brother. I *love him yet*,” and with a shuddering sigh she once more fell back.

“Pshaw! this is foolery! What is thy love to me? ’Tis already whispered thou art in my house, and should it be discovered thou art my relative, my enemies will seize upon it as an engine to hurl me from the favor of this besotted king. I have not yet arranged my plans, but if I cannot work upon Artaxerxes to degrade Esther, and place thee again on the throne, he surely *dies!*”

“Thou worm!” cried Vashti, starting from her seat, and fixing her dark, vivid eyes upon Haman—

“dare not to touch the sovereign of Persia with thy low-born hands! He shall not die!”

“What, dost thou wish him to live, blessing thy rival with his love!” said Haman, with a sneer. “Already he dotes upon the beauteous Esther, while thou art despised and forgotten!”

“Forbear!” shrieked the fallen queen. “Rend not my soul with such blasting images! Hurl Esther from my throne, and let her taste all the bitterness I have tasted!—ay, let me see her hated blood flow!” she cried fiercely, her eyes flashing with the dark emotions which swayed her bosom—all the woman lost in the dethroned queen—“let me place my foot upon her neck, and then do with me, ay, with *him*, what thou wilt!”

“If I can ruin Esther in the king’s favor, or compass her death, wilt thou lend thyself to my conspiracy?”

“I will!”

“It may be, the death of the king will be required, and I may want some trusty and unsuspected agent, who can have access to him when he sleeps, to strike the blow in secrecy and security; wilt thou be the agent?”

“*I will!*” and as she spoke the fire again fled from her cheek, and covering her face with her

hands, she buried them in the cushions, her long, dark hair falling like a funeral veil around her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING'S DECREE.

“Thy tongue deviseth mischief;
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.”—*Proverbs*, iv. 2.

HAMAN now aroused all his energy to compass his plans. Revenge for his sister's degradation, and an ambitious wish to advance himself to power, were the mainsprings of his actions. His first step was to obtain the king's confidence. This, with extreme cunning, he contrived to do. He was placed above all the nobles of the court; and the king even sent forth a decree, commanding all, at the approach of Haman, to bow down and worship him as a god. Exulting in his success, Haman now, with renewed hope, endeavored to accomplish the destruction of Esther, hoping by his influence, to induce the king to place Vashti again upon the throne.

Soon after the decree in his favor, Haman, clad in costly robes of purple and scarlet, on an Arab

courser, whose velvet housings were embroidered with gold, rode through the city, with a long train of followers, to satisfy his insatiable pride, by the adoration of all whom he passed. He rode loftily out of the gate, around which was collected a crowd of slaves and idlers, who bowed themselves to the dust at his approach, crying, "Hail, Haman! son of Mythra!" One alone stood erect, gazing with a calm brow at the pageant as it passed. Haman was astonished at his daring, but supposing him some stranger, ignorant of the king's command, satisfied his malignity by frowning darkly at the offender. The next day the same thing occurred. All were prostrate except the stranger, who stood proudly with folded arms as Haman passed. The slaves who stood around and marked the anger of Haman, expostulated with Mordecai—for it was he—upon his singular conduct. They urged the king's decree, and the power of Haman, and warned him of the danger of offending the haughty favorite. To all this, Mordecai vouchsafed no reply, and when Haman again rode forth, stood among the kneeling group, like some tall tree, erect amid the wreck of forests. Haman was galled past endurance.

"What, slave!" he cried, riding fiercely up to him, "know you not the king's command! down there and kneel before me!"

"I bow not to mortal, my lord," said the Hebrew, calmly, "to my God alone my knee is bent in adoration." And folding his linen robe around him, he slowly strode away.

Haman's wrath was great, but his nature was wily, and detecting a smile among his followers, he smothered his ire, and rode on, devising some sure and cruel punishment to the man who dared to resist his will. Calling to his side one of his trusty servants, he asked him the name of the offender.

"It is Mordecai, my lord, a Jew, and we do suspect a relation of the queen, for messages have gone between them, and Hegai said he brought Esther to the palace."

"A Jew and relative of the queen!" thought Haman, "Esther is in my power, and the throne is mine! for Haman is not so weak as to work for another; no, my fair sister, thou art but my agent, and when the king is dead, my faithful Macedonians, whom I have secreted in the city, will place me upon the throne of Persia!"

Haman asked no more questions, but, bending over his horse, whispered to his slave

"Bring me the surety of all you say, and a golden darick shall reward you!"

A few days after this, Haman rushed eagerly into his sister's presence.

“Joy! joy! Vashti!” he cried, “thy rival is in my power, and thou shalt see her blood flow at thy feet!”

“Ha! what sayest thou!” exclaimed the queen.

“I have discovered her well-kept secret at last. Vashti, Esther is a *Jewess*! despised, captive Hebrew!”

“Then shall I be avenged! Haman! I breathe free once more!” and shaking back her neglected locks, the face of Vashti beamed with triumph.

“Yes, she is of that hated, obnoxious race. As yet the king knows it not, nor shall he until my plans be arranged.”

“Quick, tell me all!” exclaimed the eager princess.

“Listen. By the many arts of which I am master, I will work upon the king against the Jews, then, taking advantage of some little disturbance which frequently occurs between these people and ours, because forsooth they cannot bear oppression, I will represent them as a dangerous race which it is the king’s duty to exterminate. I can guide Artaxerxes as a child, by his own good qualities; for the benefit of his country he would sacrifice his dearest friend. A decree goes forth for the massacre of the Jews,—Mordecai and Esther share the fate of their people,—and Vashti mounts the throne of Persia!”

“Oh, soul ravishing news! Now I shall know that peace which fled my bosom while my rival lived and was beloved!”

“Vashti!” said Haman with a withering frown, “remember thy oath! If we require the king at thy hands, strike sure!”

With a wild shriek, the unhappy woman fled into an inner room

CHAPTER V.

CASTING LOTS.

“——the idols have spoken vanity,
And the diviners have seen a lie,
And told false dreams.”—*Zachariah* x. 2.

IN furtherance of his plan of destruction and blood, Haman now continually dwelt upon the character of the Jews who were spread over the king's dominions,—he painted their restless spirit, and their former power, told of the riches which it was supposed they possessed, and exaggerated every little disturbance into which these injured people were led, and made it appear an act of rebellion.

That nothing might be wanting to further his views, Haman resolved to employ every agent who

could be of any benefit to him in his wicked purpose to revenge his sister, and to possess the throne, An intense hatred towards Mordecai, who had braved his power, filled his malignant heart and urged him on to deeds of blood and desperation.

Religion, ever a powerful engine in the hands of bad men, was one of the agents which Haman resolved to make use of against the Jews. For this purpose he bent his way towards the Temple of the Sun.

This noble structure was of white marble, gracefully proportioned. It stood in an open space near the bounds of the city, and, as Haman approached, appeared to great advantage against the dark green back ground of the mountain which towered behind the town, while the setting sun cast a roseate hue over its sculptured pillars and portico. Haman ascended the steps, passed through the richly carved doors of sandal-wood, and entered the temple. The centre of the edifice was filled with kneeling worshippers, whose faces were towards the east, but, who, in looking towards their god, were careful not to turn their backs to the sacred fire, which burned upon a large silver altar at the upper end of the temple.

Before this altar the Magii were performing the service of the evening. He whose duty it was to

attend the sacred fire, wore a linen band over his mouth, that the dampness of his breath might not sully the purity of the holy element, brought from heaven by their prophet Zoroaster. The service seemed almost over, and Haman resolved to remain quiet until the worshippers were dismissed. He had never observed the faith of his Grecian fathers, for all creeds were the same to his corrupt heart, but as a means to power he had cultivated the favor of the priests, and had professed his wish to be initiated into the religious ceremonies of the Persian Magii. With contempt he now gazed upon the scene before him. There was no light in the temple save that of the sacred fire, which threw its red glare over the marble columns and white-robed priests; over sacred vessels of gold, grotesque carving, and rich gilding, which adorned the temple. The deep silence was undisturbed except by muttered prayer of the Magii, or sigh from the bosom of some devout worshipper. These prayers over, smooth skins were produced from which were read portions of the Zend Avesta of their prophet, Zoroaster, after which the worshippers were dismissed. Some few lingered to purchase *Zor*, holy water—or drops of *Hom*, prepared from certain plants during the conjunction of particular planets, and of peculiar efficacy in

sickness. At length all were gone, priest and worshipper, except Dejoces, the Arch-Magi.

"Ah, my noble convert!" he exclaimed, when he saw Haman advance. "It is some time since you sought our temple."

"True, holy father," replied the wily noble, "the cares and duties of a court have usurped my time. Now, however, I have come to devote myself to the pure doctrines of the fire worshippers."

"In the first place, my son," said the Magi, "I must object to that designation of our religion. We do not worship fire, but merely hold it sacred, being a symbol of our god Mythra. It is a type of the *Sun*, which is the dwelling place of that supreme intelligence who is himself formed of light, and, like fire, self shining, pure, luminous.

"You have other gods, father?"

"Blessed be Mythra! yes; Orismades, the principle of good, formed of all pervading fire and pure water; he is intelligent, active, beneficent. Worship him, my son, but, at the same time, forget not to propitiate the Spirit of Evil, Ahrimanes. He is the opposite of Orismades, and with him rules the world. He is the source of all crime and misery; and, as says the Avesta of our holy prophet, Zoroaster, "He is wicked, impure, malignant, and can never hope to attain goodness."

"Pardon the question of your humble disciple, father," said Haman, "but will you deign to inform me of the purpose of the creation of this spirit of evil?"

"He was created pure, but committing sin, fell from his high estate. Since then he is permitted to roam the world for a time, to prove the virtue of man, and to entitle him to the reward destined for him who shall come from the fiery trial of the tempter, unsullied. Beware of him, my son! his influence is great; and to strengthen his power he has created Deeves, evil spirits, to assail the heart of man with wicked thoughts."

Haman, conscious of evil thoughts dropped his eyes before the priest.

"We are not however left without aid against him," said Dejoces, "Orismades has also formed many new spirits to contend with the forces of Ahrimanes. Among these are Ardibehests, the genius of fire and light, who watches over the sacred fires, that Ahrimanes may not extinguish them, and thus bring destruction upon all things; Shamrivar, Spirit of the metal and mines; Espendermad, guardian of the fruits of the earth; the angel Kourdad, who watches over water which gives strength to man and to the soil; Amerdab, genius of plants and trees."

"Truly you lack not ministering spirits," said Haman, with a concealed sneer.

"You have not heard of half," said the priest. "I have not told you of Honover; of Rash-in-rast, genius of justice; of Serooch; Behram, armed with club and arrows; of Dje; Aboudad, the Man Bull; of the Ferothers; of Kayomers; Maschia and Maschiana; Harfestes; of the Spirits who reside in planets."

"All this I will listen to, some other time, learned Dejoces," said Haman, "I must now return to the palace. This bag of gold, father," he added, drawing it from beneath his purple mantle, "I have brought to purchase perfumed wood for the Sacred Fire, that our Lord, Myrtha, may be inclined to open my heart to the pure faith, and receive me among his worshippers."

"Thou hast done well," said the priest, taking the gold with avidity, and secreting it, that he might appropriate it to his own private use. Would that all our nobles and rich men were as piously disposed. Truly we want it, and our offerings have been few of late."

"How! can it be possible the Holy Temple of the Sun is neglected!" said Haman, with affected alarm, "it is then as I feared, and the idolaters are corrupting our people."

“What sayest thou, Haman! Idolaters!”

“Holy Dejoces, thou shouldst be more watchful over thy flock. Listen. The *Queen is a Jewess*, and beloved by Artaxerxes; judge what reason we have to fear, as we have of late, the king will forsake his ancient religion, and patronize that of her people! think of our temples turned to Hebrew fanes, and our priests removed to make room for the sons of Levi!”

The alarm, the horror expressed upon the priest's face, showed the effect of Haman's communication.

“A Jewess!” he cried, “curses upon the race! Dogs! Deeves! may Ahrimanes clutch every soul of them! may the hundred years of torment in burning liquid metal, reserved for the wicked, be extended to eternity for them! Shall our temples be desecrated, our fire be extinguished for the spawn of Judah!”

As the enraged Magi turned towards his sacred fire, the red glare flashed over his bronzed features, expressive of every evil passion; he looked the personification of the Spirit of Evil he invoked, standing amid his own tormenting flame. Haman saw with inward triumph the working of the poison he had instilled. He added every thing most likely to excite the priest against the Jews, and found him a

willing agent for their extermination, as his own well being depended upon their destruction.

“Yes let them die!” exclaimed Dejoces. “Insolents! they pretend our religion is of later date than theirs and tell us our holy Zend Avesta was taken from their Bible, when all the world knows the worship of the sun, and the pure beings contained in it, is coeval with the existence of that luminary.”

“It is true, father. Let us be wary, and our plans will succeed. Go now to watch the planets that astrology may give us its aid; put up prayers to Mythra, Orismades, and Ahrimanes, that nothing may be wanting to assure us of victory.”

After a long consultation upon their future measures, the conspirators separated, and Haman took his way to the palace.

“Wise Haman!” he said, I have taken the right method to the sure accomplishment of my schemes by engaging this dolt of a priest in my service. Curse the fool! doth he imagine he can bend my lofty intellect to give credence to his crowd of angels, and gods, and devils, and holy bulls? Truly if I believe in any God, or put faith in any creed, it would be that of the Hebrew he thus scorns, with his one eternal Jehovah, his wise lawgiver, and sublime prophets. But, *there is no god, no future;*

I will not believe it, or I should go mad with the thought!"

Finding himself near the king's apartment, Haman threw into his countenance an expression of despair and rushed into the room, crying out, "Wo! wo upon Susa! wo upon Persia and Media!"

The king who was alone, started with alarm. "Haman! what moves thee thus?" he exclaimed.

"Alas, my lord, our days, I fear, are numbered! the glory hath departed from this land!" After exciting the king's fears, Haman continued, "I have just seen the head priest of the temple of the sun; he tells me the gods are angry. Orismades hides his head, and it is feared Persia will be given up to the deadly agency of Ahrimanes!"

"How know ye this?" asked the king.

"My lord, prepare to hear a prognostic of wo—*the sacred fire burneth dim!*"

The king started in astonishment and horror.

"So low," continued the deceiver, "that nothing will revive it; and it is feared it will be extinguished for ever! Then wo upon Susa! wo upon Persia!"

Artaxerxes was a superstitious man, and as he listened to the artful tale, paleness sat upon his royal brow, and his limbs trembled. He remembered the fate of the nations around him; for he had looked

upon fallen Tyre, and Jerusalem, and Babylon—and now he began to fear the doom of Persia was decreed.

“Perhaps something might be done to propitiate the gods,” he said. “Go, good Haman—seek the priests, inquire if any thing lies in my power, and I will do it.”

“I met Dejoces coming to see you, my lord,” said the lying Haman. “He bid me say, he, with his brethren, will spend this night in prayer, and in studying the planets. He requests thy presence, O king, at the Temple to-morrow at sunrise. Then, when Mythra first manifests himself to the world, he will be most propitious, and the priests will then inform thee of the result of their nightly watching.”

The monarch and his favorite sat late that night over their banquet, and the next morning early repaired to the temple.

City and valley were yet in the shade; but the snowy peaks of the neighboring mountains were rosy with the sun’s first rays—which, as they ascended the temple steps, rushed suddenly from behind the rocky barrier, and flooded the world with golden showers. The sacred fire, which had been purposely replenished with billets of wood, burned brightly and clearly as the king entered.

“How is this?” he said. “I was told the holy

fire burnt low, and, behold! the flames reach to the roof."

"It doth at present, O king," said the high priest, who came to meet Artaxerxes; "but there are moments when it burns so low, that I gaze in horror lest it be extinguished, and ruin come upon the nations in consequence!"

"How account you for this?" asked the king. "Have last night's vigils discovered aught?"

"It hath, O king! Hear the revealed will of the gods. They are angry that this highly favored city is filled with accursed idolaters? They stink in the nostrils of Mythra—and I have learned from my midnight studies, the sacred fire will be quenched if the land is not purged of their defiling presence."

"Ha! Idolaters—who are they?" asked Artaxerxes.

"The Jews, my lord."

"The Jews! they are esteemed a useful and peaceful people."

"Let the king live for ever!" said Haman, advancing. "Even if it were not the gods' decree, permit me humbly to suggest it would be for the king's benefit to send away this people. They respect not the king's laws, but abide by their own; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they be

destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the treasury as some compensation for the loss of their services. They are scattered over the king's provinces, mixing with the people, and teaching them to rebel against their royal master."

"Speak not of expediency," said the priest, sternly. "It is the will of the gods to remove them, and who dare question it? They must be exterminated, O king! They dare to revile our sacred fire, their God they say has formed the sun, the residence of ours."

The king was awed—convinced. Caring nothing for the Jews, and willing to do the priests and his favorite a service, he at once consented to their wishes.

"The gods shall be obeyed; he said. "Haman, see that this troublesome race be immediately thrust from the city."

"The city! said Haman. "They are spread all over the king's dominion, and cannot be driven forth."

"They must die, O king!" said the Arch-Magi, solemnly.

"Die! What, all this people?"

"Yes—all!" said the priest, sternly. "They and their wives and little ones. Wouldst thou dispute

the commands of Mythra? Wouldst thou deliver the land a prey to Ahrimanes?"

"You are then certain these Jews are the cause of the anger of the gods?" asked the king, hesitating to consent to the massacre of so many of his subjects.

At that moment the fire of the altar began to grow dim. It sank, and flashed and flickered until the former brilliancy which had lighted the temple gave place to a dusky, angry glare. The priests shrieked and tore their robes.

"The sacred fire is going out!" they cried. "The holy flame is extinguished! Wo upon Persia! wo! wo!"

"'Tis a Jew passing the temple!" cried Dejoces. 'It ever sinketh thus when the idolaters tread within the precincts of the Holy Fane. Open the doors—let my lord be convinced."

The doors of the temple were thrown open, and lo! before them stood a Jew! Evidently he was passing the temple and had stopped to gaze upon it, and the doors opened so noiseless he did not notice the movement. The priests all sunk down; kneeling and muttering their prayers around the silver altar, except Dejoces, who, pointing to the Jew, gazed triumphantly into the king's face. The monarch's hands were clasped, and pale and trembling, he gaz-

ed from the lessening fire to the priest and the idolater—while Haman turned away to conceal the sneering exultation with which he viewed the success of this, his well contrived artifice.

The Hebrew's white tunic was edged at the waist and bottom with blue ribbon, while a fringe of the same hue ornamented the linen wrapper which enveloped his form. His face as he gazed up at the idolatrous fane was expressive of hate and rage. He shook his closed hand at the temple, crying :

“I spit upon the idol's house ! Wo upon the fire-worshippers ! I hurl at them the words of holy Isaiah :

‘ Behold ! all ye that kindle a fire,
That compass yourselves about with sparks !
Walk in the light of your fire !
And in sparks that you have kindled,
Know that I am the Lord !
I form the light and create darkness—
Let the earth bow down before Jehovah ! ’ ”

The closing of the doors startled the Hebrew, and he passed on. “ ’Tis strange,” he murmured to himself ; “ have I mistaken the epistle ? Let me look at it again.”

Opening a letter, the Jew read : “ A brother from Jerusalem wishes to communicate important news to

Mordecai, of the holy city. Meet me at sunrise before the Portico of the Temple of the Sun."

"Truly an unsavory place to speak upon matters relative to our holy city!" said Mordecai. "I will take one more turn and peradventure he will arrive."

His correspondent came not, for the letter was written by Haman to further his unholy schemes; and Mordecai, wearied and vexed, returned to his home. As the temple doors closed, the fire—secretly fed by the priests—shot up a brilliant flame.

"A miracle!" cried the priests; "the Jew has departed!" They burst forth in a hymn of joy—and the king was vanquished.

Haman knew his noble master well. He was a tender-hearted and just prince, and he knew it would be difficult to induce him to command the massacre of so many persons, unless he was convinced it was the will of his gods. By the machinations of Haman, and the priests' juggling, he had been easily swayed to their will; and the wicked triumphed for a time.

"And now," said Haman, "let us cast lots before the altar, that we may see what day will be the most lucky for our undertaking."

"Here are dice," said Dejoces, "upon which are marked the names of the months, and on these are the days. Throw, then, O king, in the name of

Mythra—and that which is uppermost will be the day indicated by the gods as most propitious for our endeavors to cleanse the land from defilement.”

The king threw, and the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, was turned up. Haman and the priests threw with like result. At the same moment a ray of sunlight, from a concealed crevice in the wall, falling suddenly upon a crystal representation of the sun, which was placed on high behind the altar, a brilliant glory filled the temple, as if the heavenly luminary itself had risen before them!

“The god! the god!” cried the priests. Mythra himself has deigned to shine upon us!”

The credulous and excited king prostrated himself with the rest, believing the god of fire was actually present to smile upon their undertaking. All his scruples silenced, he willingly gave to Haman his signet-ring with power to act as he thought fitting. When he returned to the palace he sent letters to the governors of all his provinces, bidding them—“Destroy, kill, and cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women.” Exhausted with the scene he had gone through, the king called for wine, and he and his worthless favorite drowned all uneasy reflections in the bowl. “Put not your trust in princes.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSPIRACY.

“ Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.”—*Lamentations* iii. 48.

THE voice of mourning was heard over the vast dominions of Persia, when the king's cruel decree was known; the Jews fasted and wept, and “the city of Susa was perplexed.” The Jewish people had lived so long among their conquerors, and demeaned themselves so well, that they had found favor in their eyes, and were bound to them by many ties of friendship and kindness. How then could they arise in cold blood and slay this innocent and forlorn people? But the king's decree could not be disputed, and all prepared to obey it. The despair of Mordecai was great. He rent his clothes, and putting on a garment of sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and placed himself before the king's gate uttering loud moans and lamentations.

The queen, meanwhile, was ignorant of all that was to befall her people, nor knew she of her uncle's distress, until informed of it by her maids and chamberlains, who beheld him as he mourned at the gate.

Unable to divine the cause of his sorrow, she imagined it poverty, and sent him by a confidential attendant, an assortment of rich clothing, which she requested he would substitute for the black goat's hair robe and rope girdle which he wore. He refused this, but related to Hatach all Haman had devised against the Jews, and sent by him a copy of the king's decree to the queen. He implored his niece, if she would save her people, to sue to the king for mercy. The lovely Esther was much distressed at this news, and saw not how to obey her uncle's request, for she knew it was death for any one to enter the king's presence uncalled; and thirty days had passed since she had been sent for. How, then, could she see him to implore mercy. This she caused Hatach to report to Mordecai, who wrote in reply these words:

“Think not thy life is endangered solely by entering the king's presence. Remember thou art a Jewess, a secret of which Haman is possessed, and which his hatred to me and my nation will induce him to reveal to the king. Then hope not, by holding thy peace to escape. Thou and thy father's house will be destroyed. Fear not, Esther! God hath sent thee to the kingdom at this time that thou mightest be a deliverance to Israel!”

Esther hesitated no longer, but resolved to offer

her life as a sacrifice to her country. She would brave the king's laws and perhaps fall a victim to his anger; but she should have made an effort to save Judah from destruction, and, her duty done, she could die in peace. She returned this answer to her uncle :

“Go, gather together all the Jews that are at present in Susa, and fast ye for me. Eat not, nor drink for three days, night nor day. I and my maidens will also fast, and then I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish—I perish.”

The unhappy queen laid aside her royal apparel, and clothing herself in robes of mourning, entered her closet and uttered the following prayer.

“O! Lord God of Israel! thou only art our king—help me, a desolate woman, who has no helper but thee—it satisfieth not our enemies that we are in bitter captivity, but they have stricken hands with their idols, that they will abolish the faith that thou hast ordained, and destroy thy people, and stop the mouths of them that praise thee, and quench the glory of thy house and thy altar! Give me eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion: turn his heart to hate him that fighteth against us, that there may be an end of him, and of all that are like-minded to him. Thou knowest all things, O, Lord; thou

knowest that I hate the glory of the unrighteous, and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised—that I detest the sign of my high estate which is upon my head, and that I have not esteemed the king's feast, nor drank of wine-offerings—neither hath thy handmaid any joy since the day that I was brought hither—but in thee, O, Lord God of Abraham! Then hear the voice of the forlorn, and deliver us out of the hand of the mischievous! Amen!"

Three days did the sons of Israel in Susa, fast and pray to God to avert the calamity, and to soften the heart of Artaxerxes, that the queen might find favor in his eyes. On the fourth day, Mordecai directed his steps to the palace. It was yet early, and the palace gates were not open. Weary and faint with three days of fasting and of wo, he threw himself upon the ground, and, concealed by the pillars of the gate, indulged in mournful meditation and prayer.

"O Lord, the King Almighty!" he prayed, "the whole world is in thy power, and if thou hast appointed to save Israel, there is no man that can gainsay thee. Thou knowest all things, and thou knowest, Lord, that it was neither in contempt, nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman; for I could have been content with good will for the salvation of Israel, to kiss the soles

of his feet. I refused this, that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God: neither will I worship any but thee, O, God! And now, O, Lord, our King! spare thy people! for their eyes are upon us to bring us to naught; yea, they desire to destroy the inheritance that hath been thine from the beginning. Hear my prayer, and turn our sorrow into joy, that we may praise thy name! Amen."

The meditations of Mordecai were interrupted by the arrival of two persons, whom he recognised as Bigthana and Teresh, two chamberlains of the court. They seated themselves near to Mordecai, and entered into conversation without perceiving him.

"Of all the villanous deeds which our employer, Haman, has been guilty," said Bigthana, "this murder of the Jews and the innocent queen are the worst."

"Let them die!" said Teresh, gloomily, "they are Jews, and deserve death."

"I care not much for the Jews," replied Bigthana, "but it does seem a pity this gentle creature should be massacred; however, I am sure the king will prevent it."

"His leave will not be asked," said Teresh, with a sneer. "In the confusion of the day it is my province to see she shares the fate of her people."

Haman hopes to excuse himself to the king afterwards, and even place Vashti upon the throne."

"But if he should not be pardoned?"

"Then the king *dies*. It is for this purpose I sought thee at thy house, and gave that vial. Three drops in the king's cup, and Haman is king. I believe, however, that is the fate reserved for him at every issue of this affair."

"What a needless waste of life. Haman will never be king: think you our princes will suffer a stranger like the vile Haman upon the throne?"

"He takes care of that. The Macedonians, who are ravaging the nations around, are his countrymen, and as a last resource he will call them to his assistance."

The guards arrived to open the gates, and the dark conspirators passed through. Their career of guilt had now, however, drawn to a close. Mordecai, who had overheard all, denounced them to the soldiers as plotters against the king's life, and they were speedily loaded with chains, and cast into a dungeon to await the king's pleasure. An account of this event was despatched to Esther by Mordecai, who sent a relation of it to the king, but he, satisfied the men were in his power, gave no heed to the particulars of the plot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUEEN'S TRIAL.

“Sing and rejoice, O, daughter of Zion ! for lo ! I come. And I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.—*Zachariah* ii. 10.

THE day arrived which was to decide the fate of the captive Jews. Queen Esther, willing to risk her life for the hope of saving her people, prepared to enter the king's apartment uncalled. If he were wroth, her instant death would follow ; but if he felt inclined to grant the boon she came to ask, he would stretch forth his sceptre in token she might approach and present her petition. The queen's gentle spirit shrunk from her enterprise ; but once more resorting to her closet in prayer, she came forth strong in the Lord. The queen and her maidens were arrayed in the costliest robes. Esther, in memory of her early days, frequently mixed a little of Hebrew costume with that of her conquerors. Upon this momentous occasion, she had studied in her attire to make herself appear at the best advantage. A dress of snow-white woollen stuff of Damascus, woven with threads of gold and bordered with the same, reached nearly to her feet, just displaying her loose Persian

trousers of light roseate silk ; the royal tiara, or turban of twisted silk and gold, bound down her dark flowing locks, while the queenly mantle of purple velvet, having around it a deep embroidery of pearls, fell from her shoulders and lay in heavy masses behind her. Radiant with beauty, and smiling cheerfully, although her heart was heavy, Queen Esther, followed by a train of lovely maidens, entered the forbidden courts of the king.

Artaxerxes was sitting upon his ivory throne, glittering with gold and jewels. He wore the royal robe of Persia, purple, with stripes of silver. A tiara of the same was surrounded with a diadem of priceless jems, while his scarlet tunic was one brilliant mass of jewels and gold. Artaxerxes was considered the handsomest man of his time, and now, surrounded by his nobles, attired in crimson and blue, the favorite colors of Persia—in a magnificent saloon of marble, inlaid with ivory, and hung with cloth of gold tissue—his throne overshadowed with an immense plane-tree wrought in gold, he presented a glorious and imposing spectacle.

Queen Esther and her train entered the saloon. When King Artaxerxes beheld his present queen, unawed by the fate of her predecessor, thus daring to set his laws at defiance by boldly coming unbidden into his presence, his wrath was aroused, and

he turned towards her a countenance flaming with anger. At this sight, the heart of the gentle queen sunk within her, and she fell fainting into the arms of her maidens. The princes and assembled nobles looked upon the scene with silent sympathy ; for the lovely Esther was a general favorite in the court, and they would have knelt and pleaded for her if they dared. As the king gazed upon her, his heart softened, for he loved his gentle queen, and the Lord so wrought upon him by means of her beauty, that his heart was changed.

While each eye was watching him with intense interest, he stretched out his golden sceptre towards her. In a mild voice he said, "What wouldst thou, Queen Esther? Come near—look upon me as a brother and be of good cheer!"

Tears of joy were in every eye, and smiles upon every face when the king pronounced these words. The queen, reviving with an effort, advanced and touched the sceptre—she was safe!

Moved by her loveliness, and her distress, Artaxerxes descended from his throne, and embracing her bade her to be comforted, and speak freely her mind, and he would grant her request, were it half his kingdom. "I humbly thank my lord for this favor," said the queen. "When I entered, and beheld the king's

terrible majesty, I thought to see an avenging angel before me, and my heart was troubled within me."

"Thou shalt not die, Esther, although our commandment is not regarded, but speak thy request and it shall be granted."

"If it seemeth good to the king, let my lord come to my banquet to-morrow and bring with him the lord Haman, where I will demand my boon, which is of great importance, touching even *my life*." The king promised to be there, and Queen Esther, with a glad and grateful heart, withdrew.

Great was the pride of Haman then! He was invited to feast with the king and queen! he, a stranger and adventurer, had arrived at the high honor of being the guest of the queen, at her own request—an honor she had not conferred on any of the princes and nobles of the court. Inflated with vanity and triumph, Haman looked forward to a course of honors and prosperity. Alas for thee, Haman! Thy fabric of happiness is bravely built, there lacketh no costly stone, nor gilding, nor device of cunning workmen, but when the sky is clearest, and the sun shineth brightly, and thou securest, then suddenly shall it fall, and bury thee in its ruin!

Joy in his eye, and exultation in his step, Haman was passing from the palace, to give orders for new and sumptuous attire for the banquet, when, behold!

there, in the king's gate sat Mordecai, who, when the others around kissed the dust at his feet, stood erect, unmoved! What a check to all his greatness! What a spectre in his path to remind him of his mortality! With a groan of anguish he fled to his own house. Zeresh, his wife gazed aghast at his sudden entrance, and apparent distraction. Pale as marble, his eyes burned fiercely, and tearing his beard, he paced the room in violent agitation. Zeresh and Vashti gazed in affright upon him, but to all his wife's soothing words and anxious inquiries, he replied by bitter curses upon Mordecai and the Jews. At length throwing himself upon the ground, he cast dust upon his head. "Cursed be the day I was born!" he cried. "May the sun never rise to bless it! May it be struck from time for ever!"

"What hath befallen my lord?" asked his wife in alarm. "Yesterday he was boasting of his riches and his favor at court, and now he bewaileth his fate in dust and ashes."

"Yes, my wealth is unbounded!" he exclaimed, "I have wives and a multitude of children. I have flocks of friends, and slaves to do my bidding. I stand high in royal favor, for I am placed above the princes of the court; yea, Esther, the queen, asks no one to come in with the king to the banquet except myself. Yet all this availeth me nothing while

Mordecai, the Jew, sitteth at the king's gate and refuseth to do me honor!" Vashti turned from him with a gesture of scorn, and his wife essayed to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted. "What am I with all my greatness," he said, "If there lives a man who thus darest to scorn me!"

"Surely in the month of Adar, the Jews will die, and my lord will be rid of his foe."

"It wants some months to Adar," said her husband, gloomily.

"Were I possessed of all thy rank and power," said Zeresh, "this insolent Jew should no longer live. I would erect a lofty gallows, fifty cubits high, and I would hang my enemy thereon; thy favor with the king will save thee from his anger, if he do trouble himself with the fate of such wretches."

"It shall be done! I thank thee, Zeresh. The man shall die to-day, for I cannot be at peace while he defies me." Haman shook off the dust from his robes and hastily withdrew.

Thou who art reading these lines, beware how thou blamest Haman! If *thou art without sin*, then cast thy stone. Look within the recesses of thy own heart. When surrounded by all the world can give of wealth and happiness, hast thou not pined for more? Hast thou not striven for some fancied good, lacking which, all means of joy around thee

are neglected, and thou refusest to be at peace until it be attained.

That night, the king being restless, awoke very early and commanded the records of the palace to be brought him, that he might occupy his leisure hour in looking them over. There he beheld the service rendered him by Mordecai, when he secured the conspirators. "Have the traitors been examined?" he asked.

"No, my lord."

"Let it then be done instantly, for I see by these papers Mordecai accuses some great lord of the court as their employer. Surely I have been very negligent! Hath the man been rewarded who discovered the conspiracy!"

"He hath not yet, O king!"

"There hath just arrived without, I hear, one of my nobles. Let him enter."

The door was opened, and Haman entered. His gallows was erected, and he now came to win from the king permission to hang his enemy upon it.

"Come hither, Haman," said Artaxerxes. "What shall be done with the man whom the king delighteth to honor?"

The proud heart of Haman exulted, for he thought the king intended to confer some new favor upon him.

“For the man whom the king delighteth to honor,” said the wily Haman, “Let the king’s royal robes be brought, and the horse which the king rideth upon, and the crown royal. Let this apparel and horse be delivered into the hand of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array with these, the man whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor.’ ”

Then the king said to Haman, “Make haste, and take the robes, and the horse as thou hast said, and do even thus to Mordecai, the Jew, who sitteth at the king’s gate.”

The heart of Haman stood still when he heard these words. Must he exalt the enemy whom he came to destroy! Must he show himself to the world as groom to the despised Jew! He rushed from the king’s presence almost a maniac. Haman could not resist the king’s mandate. The humiliating ceremony was enacted, and then, with his head covered in anguish, he fled to his own house, where the gall and bitterness he had so well pent up in his bosom, burst forth with tremendous violence. “My heart did misgive me, after thy departure,” said his wife, “that I had counselled thee to do aught against

the Jew. 'Tis said they have a powerful God, who visits with awful judgments those who do them wrong. Then cease to wrestle with Mordecai, my husband and my lord, or I fear me the wrath of his God will fall upon thee."

The queen's chamberlain now arrived to escort Haman to the banquet. Arrayed in his most costly robes, and smoothing his brow, Haman followed him into the queen's presence. With joyous eyes he gazed at the magnificence around him, and at the royal feast which was awaiting him. Unsuspecting the queen's knowledge of his arts against her nation, he advanced with a confident smile to the raised seat occupied by his royal master and Queen Esther. That smile was the last the face of Haman wore.

"And now that we are assembled at thy request," said Artaxerxes, "what is thy petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted thee, even were it half my kingdom, for I have sworn it."

Then Esther, the queen, kneeling before him, said, "If I have found favor in thy sight, O king! and if it please my lord, let *my life* be given to me at my petition, and that of *my people*, at my request. For we are all sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish!"

"And who is he," said the king in his anger, "who doth presume in his heart, to devise any thing

against thy life? I understand thee not. Who are thy people?"

How sank the heart of Haman within him!

"Know then, O king, I am a *Jewess*! My adversary is this wicked Haman, who hateth me and my kin, and hath beguiled thee to give us all to slaughter."

Then was the king's wrath too great for words, for he remembered the scene in the temple, and saw through the designs of Haman. He cast a withering glance upon his ungrateful favorite, which caused him to shrink and writhe with despair.

"Ho! my guards!" cried the king, rushing to the door of the hall. He was met by soldiers, who brought in chains the two chamberlains, Bigthana and Teresh, who had conspired against him.

"Here are the men whom thou didst command to be examined, O king," said the head officer. "I have brought them that they might receive their doom at thy royal hands, for they have confessed the wicked Haman did hire them with rich gifts to practise against thy life and the queen's."

"Seize the villian!" cried the king, in a voice of thunder. "Bring him forth and let him die like a dog!"

Behold, my lord," said the officer, "there stands

without a gallows fifty cubits high ; if it please thee, we will hang him thereon."

" Ay, hang him there ! and afterwards, the others," said the king, who returned to the banquet hall.

The wretched Haman had sunk upon his knees before the queen, to implore her protection, and finding she was turning from him, grasped her hand, and entreated her to hear him.

" Ha, wretch !" cried the king when he entered, " wilt thou insult the queen before our eyes ? Away with him to death !"

Haman was dragged forth and hanged upon the gallows which had been prepared for Mordecai. The Jew was called into the king's presence.

" Here is my signet ring, Mordecai," said the king. " It was once Haman's, it is now thine. Take it, and with it all the wealth and power and rank of Haman. I cannot revoke my decree, but thou shalt have soldiers and arms to defend thy people against those employed by the wicked Haman, who seeing this preparation, will not dare to strike. Save as many as thou canst. I have promised to Nehemiah the Government of Judea. See that he hath men and money to rebuild his holy city, for I would do all I can to recompense my queen and the Jews for my unjust decree."

Then bounded the heart of Esther and her uncle

for joy. Kneeling to the good king, they kissed his hands in devout thankfulness for his generous conduct, and then lifting their eyes above, poured out their grateful souls to the giver of so much good who had shown himself so powerful to save!

THE MORAL.

Esther is another beautiful example of the duty we owe our guardians and aged relatives. Although it was exceedingly distasteful to her, to leave her quiet home and face the snares and dangers of a court, yet she did not refuse to obey her uncle when he requested her to become one of the candidates. Her patriotism and her trust in God are worthy of our great commendation. She braved the terrors of the law, and endangered the loss of her life, or of her husband's love, to save her people in their peril; counting her own will as nothing when her uncle called upon her to risk her existence for that of her country. When in all the state and dignity of royalty Esther did not forget Mordecai whom she cherished and obeyed, as if she were still the lowly Haddassah.

HEROISM OF JEHOSHEBA.

“As for my people, children are their oppressors, and *women* rule over them.”—*Isaiah* iii. 12.

MAN calls himself the Lord of Creation; yet, powerless and fragile as woman may appear, she hath ever borne equal sway with him over the destinies of the world.

In my former numbers, we have seen how efficient was woman in saving, or shielding her country or friends. In the present number, another heroic female will be displayed—but this picture will require darker shades, for, at her side are two others, who, instead of being, as designed by God, “helpers meet for man,” were his ruthless destroyers.

At the period of my story, Judea was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Each kingdom saw itself under the despotic sway of a woman. Jezebel reigned in Israel, and Athaliah, her daughter, in Judah—both women of lawless passions and

haughty spirit, and, withal, idolatrous worshippers of Baal and Astaroth.

These were only queens dowager—for, Joram, the son of Jezebel, was sovereign of Samaria, and Athaliah's son, Ahaziah, governed Jerusalem. Being much engaged in wars with Edom and Syria, their country was left to the tender mercies of these fierce and cruel women. They were universally detested; but, the people, knowing there was no redress, submitted in silence. Jezebel's persecution of the holy prophet Elijah, after his signal defeat of the prophets of Baal, is well known. "So let the gods do to me, and more also!" said Jezebel to Elijah, by a messenger, "if I make not thy life as the life of one of the prophets thou hast slain, by to-morrow morning!" Elijah fled into the wilderness, and threw himself down beneath a juniper tree, where he prayed to die, rather than to live under the sway of that cruel woman. Her wicked and unjust conduct towards Naboth, united all classes against her, and accelerated her doom.

Naboth possessed a vineyard, which joined the grounds belonging to one of Ahab's palaces, in the vicinity of the city of Jezreel. This vineyard Ahab offered to buy, that he might make it a garden; but, Naboth, unwilling to sell, refused. Ahab persisted: Naboth continued firm, telling the king it was con-

trary to law to sell his land, as it was said in Leviticus, "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine." Ahab was not used to disappointment—and, being a weak man, it preyed upon him until he was quite ill. His wife, Jezebel, sought him while lying in this mood upon his bed. "Why is thy spirit so sad, Ahab," she said; "why eatest thou not?"

"I am sore vexed," he answered sullenly. "I have asked Naboth for his vineyard, and he refuses, because, forsooth, he will not sell the inheritance of his fathers."

Jezebel gazed upon him with the utmost scorn. "What! art thou the ruler of Israel, or is Naboth!" she said. "Arise! eat bread and be merry—I will give thee the vineyard of this insolent Naboth." Jezebel swept haughtily out of the room to execute her cruel orders.

That day she caused a fast to be proclaimed, because wrong had been done in the city, which needed punishment. Naboth was then brought forth before the people, accused by two of the hirelings of Jezebel, of blaspheming God and the king. He was, of course, convicted, and carried without the city and stoned to death. Ahab took possession of the land of the murdered Naboth.

God sent Elijah to Ahab and Jezebel, to reproach

them for their wickedness, and uttered prophecies of their downfall, which, we shall see, were afterwards fulfilled.

Upon the side of a hill, in the land of Syria, stood an ancient man, leaning upon his staff, apparently resting after a toilsome march. He wore a mantle of goats' skin, while a long white beard fell down to the leathern girdle which bound his waist. He gazed sadly upon the scene which lay stretched out beneath him; although, it was lovely enough to raise a smile of admiration from even him, anchorite as he was. He stood upon one of a large circle of hills, bearing every hue and altitude, and enclosing a vast plain, watered by the two lucid streams, Abana and Parphar, and bearing in its centre a large and glorious city. It was Damascus, which reposed upon the centre of the green plain, like a snowy water-lily, wafted upon its verdant leaves. Temples and palaces of marble and ivory, adorned with gleaming gold, arose within its walls, and were reflected in the brilliant stream below. Towards this city was Elisha, the prophet, sent, to fulfil the mission of God.

“O, Damascus!” he said, sadly, “beautiful art thou to behold; but, out of thee shall come a sword, which shall bring my country low. Alas! Israel is

ripe for punishment, and the wrath of the Lord cannot be staid." A young man arose from beneath an olive tree, where he had been reposing, and approached the prophet. "My son," said Elisha, "thou seest before thee Damascus, the city of Benhadad, king of Syria. Here I am sent to anoint Hazael king, that he may be God's avenger upon Israel, who worship Baal and the golden calf, instead of Jehovah."

"God's purpose is not, then, to send Benhadad?"

"No, my son; he is so convinced of God's power, by his forced flight from before Samaria, that he fears the God of Israel."

"Unhappy land! will thy sufferings never cease!"

"Never! until it throw away its idols, and serve the living God."

The rumor, that the celebrated prophet Elisha had taken up his abode upon the hill of Damascus, was soon carried to the ears of the king. He had ever held the holy man in reverence since his memorable defeat, prophesied by him; and now, being ill, sent to know if he should recover or not.

One morning Elisha left his cave, and gazed abroad. A long procession of camels and men were crossing the plain, from the city, towards the hill upon which he dwelt. Elisha knew it was sent to him, and awaited the train's approach. A

man, richly clothed, alighted from a camel, and threw himself at the prophet's feet. It was Hazael, one of the principal lords of Benhadad, king of Syria.

“O Elisha! Holy prophet!” said Hazael, “I came from thy son, Benhadad, king of Syria. He lieth in bed ill, and hath sent me to ask thee if he shall recover of this disease. See—here are forty camels, loaded with all that is rich and rare of Damascus, which my master lays at thy feet, hoping thou wilt deign to look into the future, for him.”

Elisha looked for a long time mournfully upon Hazael, for, by his prophetic power, he saw in him the ruthless conqueror of Israel. “Go tell thy lord he will not die of this disease”—at last, he said; “and yet, I foresee, he will die of a more cruel death.”

Elisha gazed upon Hazael, until the tears ran down his aged cheek; and then, turning from him, the man of God wept bitterly

“Why weepest thou, my Lord?” asked Hazael, rising.

“Alas, Hazael! it is because I can foresee all the evil which thou wilt do to the children of Israel. Thou wilt burn their strong holds, and slay men, women, and even children, in the cruelest manner.”

“What! am I a dog, that I should do this thing!”

“Yea, Hazael. The Lord hath shown me thou shalt be king of Syria, in place of Benhadad.” We know not what spirit we are of, until we are tried. Solomon saith, ‘He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool.’”

As Hazael returned over the plain, he sank into deep musing. He should be king of Syria! How his ambitious heart leaped within him at the thought! And the conqueror of Israel!—but he would be a merciful conqueror, and Elisha should find he was not so wicked as he imagined. Elisha had prophesied Benhadad should die, and he would quietly await that event.

“What said the prophet?” asked the feeble Benhadad.

“He told me, thou shouldst surely recover of this disease.

This joyful news so excited Benhadad, as to act favorably upon him, and before the night he was nearly well. Hazael began to grow uneasy. He doubted the truth of Elisha—and, forgetting his resolution of awaiting his master’s predicted death, and not willing to rely upon God’s will, he determined to murder the king. Early in the morrow, ere day had yet appeared, and while all in the palace were asleep, Hazael crept softly into the king’s chamber. The old man lay in the heavy slumber of an ex-

hausted invalid. Hazael dipped a thick cloth in water, and pressed it upon the king's face until the spirit had fled. Then, when the murderous deed was executed, and Hazael was gazing upon his victim, did the words he had spoken to Elisha, the day before, occur to him—"Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing!"—and Hazael saw he had not read his heart aright. "But, now that I have begun, I must go on!" he said, bitterly. "Away to my soldiers!—they must proclaim me king." Hazael was anointed king of Syria.

The words of Elisha, regarding Hazael, were soon proved to be prophetic. He ravaged Israel with fire and sword, and brought upon the country all the evils which Elisha had predicted. Joram, the son of Jezebel, and Ahaziah, Athaliah's son, united their forces and besieged Hazael in the city of Ramoth Gilead, which he had lately conquered. Various skirmishes took place; in one of which, Joram was severely wounded, and returned to his mother, at Jezreel, to be cured of his wounds. Ahaziah followed him, leaving the army in command of Jehu, a man of great valor, and a skilful soldier. God's purposes were not yet fulfilled upon the wicked house of Ahab: by his humility, he averted the evil from himself, but the time was come to destroy the rebellious race from the land. Elisha

was commissioned to anoint Jehu king of Israel, in place of Joram. He sent the young prophet, who had attended him to Damascus, to fulfil the mission.

According to his instructions, the youthful prophet repaired to Ramoth Gilead. Jehu and the other captains were feasting in the guard-room, when the prophet entered. "I have an errand to thee, O captain!" he said.

"Unto which of us?" asked Jehu.

"Even to thee, Jehu, son of Jehosaphat!"

Jehu arose and followed the prophet into an inner room. The prophet opened a horn of perfumed oil, and poured it on his head, saying—"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: 'I have anointed thee king over Israel. Thou shalt be my avenger, to smite the house of Ahab. And thou shalt avenge me of Jezebel, who hath shed the blood of my servants. The dogs shall eat her in the portion of Jezreel!'" His mission over, the prophet opened the door and disappeared.

Jehu returned thoughtfully to the feast.

"Is all well?" asked one of the guests—"What said this mad fellow to thee?"

"Surely ye know him and his communication," said Jehu; "ye have sent him."

"Indeed, we know not. Tell us what he said."

“He hath anointed me king over Israel, in place of Joram, my master.”

Jehu was a favorite with the soldiers, and the son of Jezebel was hated; so that they joyfully received the news, and determined to proclaim him at once. For want of a throne, they covered the stairs, which ran up outside the house, with their scarlet mantles, and, placing Jehu on high, sounded upon their trumpets, and proclaimed Jehu king of Israel.

The warder upon the watch-tower of Jezreel reported to Joram the approach of a body of horse and chariots. Joram knew not whom they were, or if they came in peace or war.

“Let some one go out to meet them, and ask the leader if he come in peace,” said the king.

The horseman approached Jehu, who was standing in his chariot. “Thus asks king Joram,” he said: Is it peace?”

“What hast thou to do with peace?” replied Jehu. “Get thee behind me.”

The messenger did as he was ordered, and joined the train of Jehu. A second messenger was despatched, who also remained with the approaching party.

The city now became alarmed, and gathered upon the walls to watch the troop. Joram sent for the

watchman, to inquire more particulars. "I know not who they be, my lord," he said; "but, their driving is like that of Jehu, the son of Jehosaphat, for he ever driveth furiously."

"It is Jehu," said the king, "and perhaps bearer of news from the army. Make ready the chariot, and I will ride out to meet him."

Joram and Ahaziah, each in his chariot, left the city, and met Jehu, just by the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite. Then sank the heart of Joram within him, when he recollected it, for many prophets had denounced judgments against him and his house, for the great iniquity of his father and mother. The chariots stopped.

"Is it in peace thou comest, Jehu?" asked Joram.

"What peace is there for any," said Jehu, "when the wickedness and witchcraft of thee and thy mother, Jezebel, are so many?"

"Treason!—Treachery!—O Ahaziah!"—cried Joram, and turned to fly, but an arrow from Jehu, the avenger, brought him low, and he sank down dead in his chariot.

"Throw him upon the field of Naboth," said Jehu to his captain, Bidkar. "Now have the words of the Lord come to pass, which thou and I heard when we rode behind Ahab: 'I have seen the blood of

Naboth,' said the prophet; 'and I will revenge me here, in this very field,' saith the Lord."

When Ahaziah, king of Judah, saw the deed, he fled; but was pursued by the people of Jehu.

"Smite him also in his chariot," cried the avenger, and Ahaziah was soon dead. "Bury him," said Jehu, "for he is the son of the good Jehosaphat, but deserves death for his mother's sake, and because he joined himself with the ungodly Joram." The news of the king's death spread consternation over Jezreel, and they beheld the conqueror's entrance with fear and trembling. His errand, however, was not to the people, but to their rulers. He sought the palace of Jezebel.

Jezebel inhabited the ivory palace which her husband Ahab, had built. She had decked herself out, and painted her face, in order to dazzle the conqueror, and stood at a window awaiting his approach. Upon her head she wore a golden net, or caul, surrounded by a gauze shawl, as a turban, while chains and ornaments of gold hung over her cheeks, her neck and arms, and little golden bells tinkled at her feet. But, in vain were all these mufflers, crimping-pins, and rings, and jewels called in play: they could not avert her fate. In spite of her design to win Jehu, her natural evil temper broke forth, and, in a taunting accent, she cried out, "Thou wilt re-

pent this deed, Jehu! Had Zimri peace who slew his master?"

Jehu looked up at the windows, which were crowded with slaves and attendants. "Who is on my side? Who!" cried Jehu. Many voices called out their willingness to join him. "Throw down, then, that wicked woman. Let the dogs eat her, according to the words of the prophet." They threw her down, and Jehu rode over her. "Go, and bury her," he said, afterwards, "for she is a king's daughter." And the words of the prophet were fulfilled!

Eager for sovereign power, and devoid of natural feeling, Athaliah resolved, when she heard the death of her son, to seize upon the throne. The natural heirs, however, stood in her way; and these, although they were her own grand-children, she doomed to death.

Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah by another mother, was a woman of great and good qualities, and tenderly attached to her brother. She wept sorely for his death, and acted a mother's part to his young orphans. She was wife to Jehoiada, the high priest of the temple, and lived with him within the precincts of the holy house. "Ahaziah hath been some time dead," she said one day to her husband,

“and I have not seen any preparations towards anointing his son as king in his stead. Canst thou tell me, Jehoiada, why it is not done?”

“Hadst thine illness not prevented thee from visiting the palace, Jehosheba, thou wouldst have known”—replied the high priest, in a sad accent.

“What! is the young Zezron dead?” she asked, in alarm.

“Not yet,” said her husband, gloomily. “Now that thou art strong enough to hear the terrible news, know that Athaliah hath seized upon the sovereign power, and hath imprisoned the young princes in the palace!”

This was a great shock to the tender heart of the princess. “Alas! my sweet young nephews!” she said, while tears bedewed her face, “they are in the hands of a cruel tigress! Can we not do something, Jehoiada? Let me go to Athaliah, and surely she will listen to my prayer, and let them depart to their uncle’s, or to my care, for, I fear me, she will not yet be satisfied with this cruelty.”

“No, Jehosheba, seek not Athaliah. Thy prayers, be well assured, cannot soften the heart of that accursed woman.”

“She surely will not imprison all those noble young princes for life!”

“Alas! their lives will not be long, I fear!”

Jehoiada turned from his wife's tears, and retreated to the temple. Here he bent in prayer to God, that he would look in pity upon Judah, and avert from it the threatened evil. For Jehoiada had not revealed to Jehosheba the fact of the intended massacre of the innocent princes, which had been told him in confidence, that morning by the captain of the royal guard.

That night, Jehosheba, unable to sleep, arose and walked in the marble court before her apartment. There she remained some time, reflecting upon the situation of her nephews, to whom, particularly the young Joash, then just a year old, she was very much attached. She could not rest easy without doing something for them, and was busily resolving plans for their benefit, when she was aroused by the sound of trampling horses, and rattle of armor. She ascended the wall, and beheld a troop of soldiers enter the palace gate. Soldiers at midnight!—her heart sank, and she fell back against the parapet in a cold tremor.

What could it mean! Some deadly event was in progress, and her thoughts turned with affright towards the royal children. But Athaliah could not be so cruel—so wicked! A sudden shriek as from a death-stroke, awoke the silence of night. Jehosheba started as if her own heart had been pierced.

She turned toward the palace, where a miserable scene met her view; from the balconies and terraces of the woman's apartments, were children and females rushing apparently in the wildest affright. Some soldiers ran in pursuit of them, whom the wretched princess recognised as the queen's own band, who were notorious for performing every bloody deed which the queen might dictate.

The cries of children and women almost aroused the princess to madness, for she doubted not the cruel Athaliah had given over the young princes to slaughter. Could she stand there and look on without helping them! But what availed her feeble arm against those ruthless men. Jehosheba rushed from the wall, and had nearly regained her apartment, when another loud wail arrested her steps, and she determined, at whatever risk, to seek the palace, and endeavor to save one of her nephews. There was a private way built by Solomon, which led to the palace, and over this Jehosheba wildly rushed, resolving to die with, or save her nephews. She sought the women's apartments, and found the court filled with soldiers.

"You cannot pass in, lady," said one.

"Away! I am the Princess Jehosheba!"

At the majestic wave of her hand, the soldiers gave way. A dreadful sight met her eye on enter-

ing the rooms. Dead and dying children, and nurses who had faithfully defended them, were lying around. Bloody and brutal soldiers opposed her path, but Jehosheba struggled through, for she had thought of the infant Joash, and sought to conceal him, at least. The deadly deed would have been over ere this, but there were a few devoted servants of the house of David, who resisted the soldiers' bloody purpose. All were killed except those in the last apartment. At the door stood two faithful eunuchs, disputing the soldiers' entrance. Jehosheba endeavored to force her way through.

"Forbear, princess," cried one of the eunuchs, "the fiends will kill you, also."

Jehosheba was not to be daunted. She pushed aside their swords, and entered the apartment. She gazed wildly around; there were several children and young persons there, of the royal blood, all weeping and clinging to their attendants in the greatest terror.

Cowering in a corner, sat a nurse, pressing in her arms an infant. It was the young Joash, now the only living child of Ahaziah. Jehosheba seized the infant, and concealing it under the wrapper she wore, beckoned the nurse to follow, and rapidly left the room. The faithful eunuchs were dead, and the soldiers, busy with their prey, cared not to stop her,

for they were not ordered to murder any except the royal children. Struggling through blood and ribald soldiers, and severely wounded, the heroic Jehosheba at last saw herself in the temple court.

Jehoiada was awakened from his slumber by sobs of anguish. He arose hastily, and beheld his beloved Jehosheba covered with blood, lying senseless upon the floor, while a strange nurse and infant were weeping over her.

Six years was Joash concealed in the temple ; the secret of his escape from the massacre being only known to his aunt, uncle and nurse. In the temple there was more security than in any place in Jerusalem, for it was then only frequented by a few faithful Jews ; the remainder of the people repairing to the idol fanes, which Athaliah had reared in many places. The glory had departed from the house of God ; its gold was stripped off—its walls broken down, and the golden utensils decorated the altars of Baal. At the end of these six years, Jehosheba thought the favorite moment had arrived to restore Joash to the throne of his fathers. Athaliah, by her rapacity—her cruelty and unlicensed passions, was universally detested, and the people began to sigh for release from her tyranny. The measure of her

iniquities was full, and God had commanded her downfall. Jehoiada, as a preliminary step, called to his council some of the Levites whom he could trust, and some officers who he knew were disaffected towards Athaliah. After swearing them to secrecy in the temple, he revealed to them the fact of the existence of one of the royal princes. They were all rejoiced at the news, and vowed to serve him, and place him upon the throne. These were commissioned to go to the several towns and cities of Judah, and collect all the Levites who had been dispersed, and send them to the temple. All the nobles of Judah who had fled from Athaliah's tyranny, were also to be informed of the conspiracy. All was ready. The day arrived, and the people summoned by the High Priest, on pretence of an unusual fast, crowded the courts before the temple. Each one who was in the secret, was instructed in his part. They were divided in three bands—one was placed at the court gate, and one at the outer gate, while the third encircled the young prince. The courts were filled with people, who awaited in silence the commencement of the religious ceremonies of the day. Jehoiada, the High Priest, entered the upper court from a side cloister, leading by the hand a young boy of seven years, and followed by the Princess Jehosheba and his nurse. The High

Priest advanced to the head of the steps leading to the lower court, that all might behold him.

“Ye men of Judah!” he said, “ye have heard how our God hath sworn he will establish the throne of David for ever, and hath said David shall never want an heir to his throne—then why suffer ye the daughter of Jezebel, the seed of Sidon, on the throne of our glorious king.” A murmur of astonishment interrupted Jehoiada. “Men of Jerusalem, I have called ye here this day to know if ye will serve Baal or Jehovah.”

“We will worship the Lord our God!” cried several voices.

“And I have called ye here to know,” continued Jehoiada, “if ye will serve the daughter of Jezebel, or a son of David!”

“Down with Athaliah!” exclaimed a few who were in the secret.

“Behold, then, this youth. It is Joash, your lawful prince, the son of Ahaziah; saved from the massacre by the heroism of his aunt, the Princess Jehosheba, who, with the prince’s nurse, are here to corroborate the tale.”

Loud acclamations of joy, which seemed to come from the hearts of all, resounded from the throng. The High Priest then placed the prince against the marble column, the usual stand of the king when in

the temple, and after anointing him with the holy perfumed oil, placed the diadem of David upon his head. Then the silver trumpets sounded—and the sweet singers of Israel burst into hymns of praise, and the joyous multitude shouted, “God save the king!”

Athaliah, like all tyrants, was of a very suspicious nature. Her spies had informed her of the unusual concourse in the temple, and she had been uneasy the whole morning. Aroused by the shouts and clangor of trumpets, she repaired to the temple through the king’s passage; and when there, a blasting sight met her view. Placed in the centre of that spacious court, was a crowned king, around whom stood a circle of armed guards; while the people were crowding to kneel and do homage to the son of David. The striking resemblance of the noble child to her son, Ahaziah; the presence of Jehosheba and his nurse, whom she recollected, revealed to her the truth—the boy had been secretly reared, and the people had conspired to place him upon her throne. The most demoniac passion took possession of her. She stamped and tore her robes—“Rebellious wretches!” she cried, “tortures shall follow this! Ho! my guards! treason! treason!”

“Take that accursed woman hence!” said the High Priest, “and slay her without the temple.”

Athaliah was slain, and Joash reigned in her stead. In future years, when the priests and the Levites gazed upon their glorious temple renewed and repaired by their pious prince, and the people were sunning themselves in the peace and plenty which filled the land, they united, first in praising God for his mercies, and next to him, the good Princess Jehosheba for her heroism.

THE MORAL.

May we all imitate the heroism of Jehosheba when called upon to undertake any difficult or dangerous achievement. She turned from the gaieties of a court to live in a retired and humble manner within the temple, where she practised a faith then despised by all. At the cry of innocence she rushed to the rescue, heedless of the assassin's sword, or the Queen's displeasure. This her generous devotedness was of the greatest benefit to her country, for in her nephew's reign the idols were overthrown, and the true worship prevailed. Let us not think of our own peril when we may succor the poor or the oppressed.

HEROISM OF JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

PART FIRST.

THE EXILE.

Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. *Jer. vi. 20.*

The majestic oaks, the herds and verdant pastures of Bashan, have ever furnished to the inspired prophets of Israel, types and figures of richness and fertility. Age after age has passed away, nation has succeeded nation in earth's pageant over these fair plains, cities have risen on those river banks ; but the nations have melted into the shadows of the past, the cities have crumbled away, and all has changed save those glorious oaks of Bashan, who still crown the summits of the hills, where their kindred flourished, and gaze down as of old, upon the vales and rivers beneath. Their day however must come, for Isaiah hath said ' the cedars of Leb-

anon,—and all the oaks of Bashan, shall be brought low.'

Arrayed in all the gorgeous robes of her ancient glory, ere yet her 'time to weep' had come, the land of Bashan burst upon the gaze of two persons as they gained the brow of one of the hills which separated her from the land of Gilead.

"Ha! by Moloch this is a glorious country," said one—a tall man clad in a dark dress which fell to his sandelled feet, and in a corslet of rusty steel, and battered helmet.—"Behold those frowning mountains," he added—"see how they spring to the skies, and then sink down into soft grassy slopes losing themselves in these pretty green vales. Mark how the glittering Jabbok, like a jewelled necklace, rests upon the bosom of these verdant plains; reflecting upon its shining surface, city, and tower, and marble palace."

"Yea, Haziël, it is a beauteous country," returned his companion a man of lordly bearing—"but as a painting it stands before my eyes creating admiration alone; my heart, untouched by its loveliness, still fondly turns to Gilead."

"I hope the heart of my Jephthah is not so wedded to his native country, that it sees no beauty in our favored land. What charm is there in Gilead, my Lord, that you so cherish it. Your kindred, as

you tell me, have thrust you from your father's house, and you have quitted Gilead, never to return."

"My poor old father still remains there, and loves me, I am sure in spite of all. Sometimes my heart reproaches me for leaving him in the hands of his unruly sons.

"Think not of him my Jephthah, he hath treated you with much unkindness. What, will he idly stand and see one son robbed of his patrimony, that the others may riot on it, and never lift a hand to right you?—You, so famed for worth and every manly grace?"

"He is old and powerless, Haziël. I am not his lawful son. Child of a favorite handmaid, I shared with her all his heart, even after he married and was again a father. His wife ever looked upon my mother and myself, with envious eyes. Her dislike was infused into the bosoms of her sons, and they, by every art, sought to wean my father's favor from me. Happy with my mother, I did not ask their love, nor knew what sorrow was until she died. Rejoiced to find me without protection, my cruel mother-in-law and brothers, redoubled all their efforts to effect my ruin. I sought by engaging in manly sports, or by joining in excursions against the enemy, to keep aloof from them, but the fame I acquired in these pursuits aroused their evil passions

anew, and by an united effort, they prevailed upon my poor old invalid father, to deny me all share of my patrimony, and finally to turn me from his house."

"Shame on them! Had you no friends who might use their influence for you."

"None of sufficient authority to break the phalanx of interested persons who surrounded my old father."

"Were I in your place, I would have applied to the elders of the city that they might force your brothers to reinstate you in your rights."

"That, my good Haziel, is one of all my sorrows and my injuries that affects me most. I did apply to them, and they refused my suit. I, who so faithfully had served them, who had kept at bay the neighboring nations, and raised the fame of Gilead to its present height!"

"Oh, they were purchased by your brother's gold!"

"From my infirm father, and my brothers I expected nothing, but from my country I surely had a right to look for justice. So keenly did I feel my fellow-citizens ingratitude, that I shook the dust from off my feet upon the city, and left it, vowing never to return."

"A brave resolve my noble Jephthah! Think no more of such false friends and turn to those, who,

with open arms, are waiting to receive you. Trust yourself to my direction, and by Baal! the citizens of Gilead shall rue the day they ever injured Jephthah!"

"Gently my friend. Ere I join your band, I must exact that I never be required to attack my countrymen. In any excursion against the neighboring Canaanites or the Ammonites, who so often harry our borders, I will take a part, but against my native city, although so greatly injured by it, I will never lift my arm. If ye accept me as your comrade on these terms, I am yours." "We are too proud to number the celebrated Jephthah among us, to refuse any thing he may demand. Your wishes shall be obeyed. Follow me good sir; our friends expect us in the cave below this hill."

Jephthah turned with a slight shudder from his new friend. "Jephthah, I read your feelings," said Haziël, "learn we are not bandits, nor common robbers. Like yourself, we are men of rank, who, each receiving some rebuff from this rude world, have here retired, to pass our time in deeds of arms, or merry revelry. I am related to the princes of Naphtali, and as reluctant as yourself to sully my good name by deeds of rapin, or of ruffian violence. Come on my Jephthah."

The new friends descended the hill, and advanced

toward a large cave whose yawning mouth opened into the dark bosom of the mountain. As they entered, deafening shouts of 'Welcome Haziël! welcome noble Jephthah!' awoke the echoes of the vault. The cavern floor was spread with skins, upon which were seated, a circle of men, clad in wild costume, drinking wine from golden flagons or leather bottles. At one end stood the statue of Chemosh crowned with grape leaves, god of revelry and drunkenness; and at the other end the goddess Ashtaroth, queen of love and beauty, whose head was surrounded by a circlet of stars, surmounted by a crescent moon. These misguided men had left the God of Israel behind them, and erected altars to the gods of those nations among whom they roamed.

"Enter lordly Jephthah!" said Haziël—"there is the abode of happiness. Forget the ungrateful world you have left behind, and let your hours be passed in freedom and in joy!" With conscience tugging at his heart and bidding him return, Jephthah entered the cave.

PART II.

REPENTANCE.

The Ammonites had long meditated an inroad into Gilead, and now that Jephthah, the only man they feared, was expelled the city, they commenced an attack upon its borders. Many divisions of the Gileadites were sent against them, but they were repelled, and the enemy entered the land and directed their march towards the city. The brothers of Jephthah had all been defeated, and had withdrawn themselves into the city where they were the scorn of all. The defeated soldiers, now encamped without the walls, were disheartened with their repeated unsuccess. "O that the noble Jephthah were here," said one of the soldiers, "and Ammon would not shame us thus!" "Yea," said another—"had we but Jephthah for our captain, we should soon repel the invaders!"

The murmurs spread through the camp and reached the city. "Where is Jephthah!" became the public cry. Shouts of derision against his brothers, and disapprobation against the Elders who had turned the warrior from the city, resounded from every quarter. From rumors they rose to open rebellion, and the Elders and Jephthah's family were

obliged to fly from the wrath of the people and shelter themselves in a fortified tower. In front of this, the populace assembled, vowing destruction upon the Elders unless Jephthah were placed at the head of the army. The Elders to appease them promised to send messengers after him into the land of Bashan. Messengers were accordingly dispatched. After several days passed in great suspense, they returned with Jephthah's refusal to aid his ungrateful city. "Go yourselves!" cried the people to the Elders—"take with you Jephthah's recreant brothers and upon your knees intreat him to return and redeem us from that destruction you could not avert!"

Forced to obey, these proud old men, who as rulers of the city had seen all at their feet, now reluctantly prepared to seek out him they had so deeply injured, and pray him to forgive them and return.

The Canaanites meanwhile had made an inroad into the northern part of Israel, but they had been driven back by Jephthah and his men who had pursued them into their own land. The victors were now reposing in a tower conquered from a Canaanite lord, which stood upon a hill overlooking the valley of lake Merom. In a marble court belonging to this castle were Jephthah and Haziel; reposing upon couches of ivory, before a table spread with tapestry and set with vases and flagons of gold. Haziel

was busily engaged with the rich viands arranged before him, but Jephthah lay gazing sadly out the wide doorway. His eye roved over the soft green vale beneath, with the shining lake reposing in its bosom, and rested upon the mountains which bound the horizon beyond ; but his thoughts were far away towards that distant home which his heart yearned to see once more.

“Art tired of these dainties already, Jephthah?” asked Haziél. “This Canaanitish lord was an excellent judge of wine, for his spiced wine is equal to any of Helbon.”

Jephthah did not answer, and his friend again addressed him. “Why art thou so sad captain? art thinking of Gilead again?”

“Yes, Haziél. I repent of my hasty refusal to succor my native city ; and am half inclined to return and offer to head my people against the Ammonites.”

Haziél sat down his jewelled cup, and gazed at Jephthah with frowning brow—“Ingratitude it seems is a Gileadite trait,” he said. “When injured and rejected by your countrymen, I received you with the ardor of a friend, and gave you the command of my troops—and now, at their first beck you return to them.”

“Nay, Haziél, speak not so warmly. I have not

resolved to go, conscience sometimes reproaches me, and my heart whispers it would be sweet to return them good for evil. Should I listen to their prayers, I know that God would bless my arm, and enable me to repel the invaders."

"Believe me they stand in no danger. This is some plot of your kindred to lure you into their power that they may take your life. Their coward souls lose their repose while great Jephthah lives."

"It may be so, Haziël. I will banish these regrets, and strive to repay my friend all that kindness he has lavished upon the humble Jephthah. But see Haziël! he suddenly exclaimed, pointing out the doorway—"what manner of men are those now crossing yonder valley?" Jephthah and Haziël arose and looked from the gate.

A troop of men, mounted upon camels and asses, were moving over the verdant carpet which nature had spread upon the vale below. Now they pass the borders of the lake, their forms reflected in its mirrored surface, and now they enter the path leading to the tower, and begin to ascend towards it. The gate was hastily barred—their followers called, and all ascended to the roof, from whence they beheld the party approaching. They gained the summit of the hill, and then stood upon the green plain in front of the tower. One glance, and Jephthah

turned away and covered his head with his mantle, to conceal the deep emotion their appearance created in his bosom. Could it be? Yea, there were the venerable rulers of his city in all their state, their purple robes of office almost covering the noble white asses upon which they rode! Why were they there? His city must be in danger, and they had sought him as their shield. These aged men had undertaken this dreary journey to seek his aid, refused to their messengers! Gratified, subdued, Jephthah burst into tears. When, however, he again turned towards them, his eye fell upon a party of men who followed the elders, mounted upon camels covered with rich trappings and with chains of gold. They were his perfidious brethren. Dastard souls! How dare they face the man they had so basely injured! The heart of Jephthah was again steeled against Gilead, and following his friends, he strode loftily into the presence of the elders, who were now assembled in the marble court below.

"Noble Jephthah!" said their spokesman, advancing, "you see before you the elders of your city, who, finding their messengers unheeded, have come this weary journey to seek your aid against the Ammonites who press us sore.

"Truly, for men of age, your minds are very changeful," said Jephthah, bitterly.

“How short a time is it since ye thrust me from your doors, and now ye come thus far to seek me ! Once it was my pleasure and my highest joy to do your bidding, but ye repelled me—and now ye come in your distress to pray me to return !”

“O noble Jephthah, pity that distress which brings us here ! Reject us not. Our hosts call upon you to take their head as their chosen captain. The name of Jephthah once resounding before our walls, the dreaded sound shall strike our foes with terror and Gilead shall be free ! Turn not away.—Wilt thou see Gilead low ? wilt thou see thy home, thy friends doomed to destruction”—“What home ! what friends !” said Jephthah, gloomily. “Behold thy repentant brethren here,” said the Elder, pointing to a group of young men who just then entered the gate, “they yield their gold, their all !”

“No, no !” exclaimed Jephthah, in violent agitation, motioning them back.—“Do not let them come ! I cannot see them. Years of humiliation, of reproach, and of injury rise before me and shut my heart against them. I cannot see them.”

There was silence in the court, and the dejected young men turned to retire.

“And yet, as a follower of the just God of Israel I must forgive. Young men, return ! I do forgive you, for ye are my father’s sons, but stay not here, if

ye wish Gilead well. Repose in yonder rooms—there shall my people minister to your wants.” Jephthah waved his hand, and his degenerate brethren crossed the court to the interior apartments.

“O Jephthah, I deemed your heart were formed of nobler nature than thus to harbor vengeance,” said the Elder, reproachfully. “Ye then reject us—refuse to aid your native city, and thus devote us all to slaughter! Remember your aged father—your daughter.”

“Ha! my sweet young child! I had forgotten her—I must to her rescue indeed. My fathers, accuse me not of cherishing revenge. It is my only wish to act according to the laws of God. Forgive me that I have grieved ye thus, but you know not all the suffering my late exile has cost me!”

Haziel, who had stood with his hands folded in the loose sleeves of his scarlet dress, an attentive listener to all that passed, now saw with alarm that Jephthah was relenting. “My friends, your time is wasted in vain words,” he said, advancing to the Elders. “All ties between the noble Jephthah and yourself are broken by your own strong arm. Ye sent him poor, and sorrow stricken from your walls, I took him in, clothed, fed, and cheered him. Think ye he can thus lightly leave me?”

Haziel looked at Jephthah, but he was silent.

“Yea, I brought him hither,” continued Haziël, growing warmer, “that he might reap fame and riches in the enemy’s land, and think ye he is so lost to honor as to abandon me here to be devoured by the Canaanite? Jephthah, speak! ye will not leave me!”

Jephthah seemed torn with conflicting emotions. “Elders of Gilead,” at last he said, “Ye must return alone!”

“Nay, nay, Jephthah!” they cried, kneeling before him, “listen to the cry of your perishing country! Come with us—Do not refuse our prayer!”

When Jephthah beheld the rulers of his city upon their knees before him; those august old men to whom since childhood he had looked as if to very gods—their robes of state in the dust, their venerable beards dropping with tears, and their aged hands lifted to him for succor, he thought his heart would have burst within him.

“Rise, rise, my lords,” he cried, mingling his tears with theirs as he stooped to raise them, “Do yourselves not this great dishonor as to kneel to me. I go! I am yours—Receive me again as your son, and I will follow you to death!”

Jephthah was wrapped in their warm embraces, and blessed and thanked by the happy Elders.

“Farewell, Haziël!” he said, turning towards

his friend. "Farewell, Jephthah the ingrate! Jephthah the tool!" said Haziël, bitterly.

"Speak not thus, thou son of Naphtali!" said the Elder. "Thou seest thou art known under thy bandit disguise. What dost thou here when war threatens Israel! and thou, son of the great house of Issachar! and ye, noble youths, whom I see around me!" continued the Elder, addressing the assembled band of Haziël; "Follow the steps of Jephthah, I entreat ye, ere it be too late. Here is an honorable opening by which ye may retrace your path. In this coming war, your lost honor and fallen fortunes may be retrieved, and ye be worthy yet of your lofty race." The Elders each addressed the young men, urging them to return with them. Their patronage and protection was promised them, with honorable posts in the war. Jephthah's entreaties were joined to theirs, which were in a measure successful; Haziël and some of his friends agreed to accompany Jephthah, and they followed the triumphant Elders to the camp at Mizpeh.

PART III.

THE VOW.

SHOUTS of joy welcomed Jephthah's arrival, from the soldiers. He was led by the Elders towards a magnificent tent of scarlet, bordered with gold. "Enter, great Jephthah, the tent of the captain of our host," said the Elder. "May the God of Israel be with thee, and make thee conqueror over Ammon!" Jephthah paused before the entrance of the tent, and turning, addressed them thus—"Ye have promised me, O Elders of Gilead, the post of captain over your armies; but how know I, when I return from the wars, ye will not thrust me out as before? Ere I consent to lead you to battle, ye must agree unto these two things; that I be not only captain in war, but ruler in peace. If ye now make me Judge over Gilead, I will take the command of your armies,—if not, I will return to my strong hold."

The Elders willingly agreed to his demands, as they were fully aware of the superiority of Jephthah over all his people, and would gladly elect him as Judge. Jephthah, rendered wise by the events of the past, directed an altar of commemoration to be erected, that the people might witness and confirm his installation in those great offices. The altar was

raised in the centre of the host, in front of the tent of Jephthah, and there, before the assembled army, and before the Lord, whose name was called upon to witness the compact, he was installed as Judge, and captain over Gilead. The Elders repeated before the people the conditions they had agreed upon between themselves and Jephthah, and then turning towards him said, "The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so, according to thy words." The grateful acclamations of the men of Gilead, testified to their joy at his elevation over them. Their God, who had been called upon to bless the newly elected Judge, signified his assent to their choice, by shedding down wisdom and might from on high, upon their chosen leader.

Determined not to await the coming Ammonites Jephthah immediately marched to meet the foe. Wherever he appeared, the people, become more confident now they beheld him at the head of the army, hastened to join his forces. After winding through a defile in the mountains of Gilead, Jephthah beheld against the distant horizon, the banners, and spears, and glittering chariots of the Ammonites. Here he halted, and drew up his men in order of battle. Although his faith assured him the Lord would give him the victory, Jephthah was anxious it should be a bloodless one, and resolved, by negocia-

tion, to induce the Ammonites to retire. Many men, newly elected leader of an army, who knew much was expected from them, would be eager to signalise themselves by some warlike exploit, but Jephthah's conduct was ruled by the laws of God rather than of man, and he sent to demand of the Ammonite king, the cause of his appearance in arms. The king of Ammon, who had imagined Gilead already in his power, was surprised and alarmed when he beheld a numerous army posted in his path. He paused in his victorious career, and encamped upon the plain, where he awaited the heralds which he saw approaching. Admitted into the tent of the king, Jephthah's messengers thus addressed him :

"Thus sayeth Jephthah, captain of the Lord's host, to the king of the children of Ammon—Why is it that thou hast come up to fight me in my land? Have I evil-entreated thee? If I have injured thee, speak, and I will repay if it be in my power."

"Go, and tell your leader," replied the king, "I come to recover those lands which the children of Israel took from me when they came up out of Egypt."

"What land was this, O king?" asked the messenger. "The richest part of my inheritance have they ravished from me; that fertile tract whose bounds three rivers lave, the Jabbok, Arnon, and

Jordan. Restore this portion peaceably, and I will return to Ammon. If ye refuse, they shall be mine by force, my chariots shall crush your ranks and seize them from your hand."

The messengers departed, and repeated to Jephthah all that had been spoken by the King of Ammon. Fully instructed by their captain, they again stood before the king and said—"Thus saith great Jephthah, O king—Israel took not this land from the children of Ammon, nor of the Moabite their ally; it was in possession of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and from them they conquered it. Nor would they have thus bereft him, had he granted them that peaceful passage through his land which they requested. Listen, O king, while I rehearse the facts relating to their march, and to their battle with the Amorites. When Israel came through the wilderness from Egypt, then Israel sent messengers to the Kings of Edom, and the King of Moab, saying, 'Let me I pray thee pass through thy land?' but they would not consent; then they compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and encamped upon the banks of the Arnon, which is the border of Moab. Israel then sent messengers unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying let us pass we pray thee, through thy land unto my place. Sihon refused and gathered his people together, and fought

against Israel. The God of Israel delivered the land of the Amorites into the hand of Israel, from Arnon even unto Jabbok. Wilt thou then ask from us the land given to us by our God? Take what thy own god Chemosh giveth thee. Zippor king of Moab did never strive to regain these lands, and now dost thou come to take them after Israel hath possessed them three hundred years? Thou doest me wrong to war against me, and the Lord the Judge, be judge this day between the children of Israel, and the children of Ammon!"

The king of Ammon would not hearken longer to the messengers, but, breaking up the conference angrily dismissed them.

Trumpets now resounded from every side, and they rushed to meet each other in deadly strife. Then was heard 'the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.' The ground shook under the roar of the chariots, and tramp of armed men, camels and elephants. The war-horse was there in his strength; 'who swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage,' who mocketh although 'the quiver rattled against him, and the glittering spear and shield.' In the whirlwind of battle, Jephthah for one moment forgot his trust in God, and tempted him to fight upon his side; he vowed a vow before the Lord, and said, "If thou shalt, without fail, deliver the children

of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering!" A rash vow which Jephthah ever after deplored, and, which if he had reflected one moment, he would not have made. Jephthah suffered from his first error, *evil communication*, he had 'stricken hands,' with idolaters, and while residing with them, had witnessed their frequent sacrifices to their gods, and forgot he spoke to a God who delighted not in such vows. Into this grievous error he had not fallen, if he had shunned instead of making friends, of the sons of Baal.

The children of Ammon fled before the host of Jephthah. They were pursued into the heart of their country, and twenty cities conquered, and the whole land completely subdued.

PART IV.

THE SACRIFICE.

The city of Gilead was filled with rejoicing that their enemy was repelled, and its streets were crowded with the citizens, eager to behold the triumphant entry of their victorious leader. Jephthah

approached, seated in a brazen chariot surrounded by his steel clad warriors. His robe of blue embroidered with gold, was bound by a broad girdle of golden mail, a sword hung in chains from his side, and shoes of brass defended his feet, a scarlet mantle fell from his shoulders, and around his head was a band of steel chain-work, from which, projected in front, a horn of gold, giving him a fierce and terrible appearance. When the procession arrived before the house of Jephthah the gate was thrown open, and a group of young girls came dancing forth, mingling their jocund music with the cheers of the populace. What saw the conqueror in yon joyous train, that he started as if a shot from the enemy's archers had stricken him!—why bowed his lofty head unto his bosom? At the head of the youthful train came the hero's daughter, his only child, holding aloft the sweet sounding trimbrel, and attired as became a rulers daughter, in a robe of divers colours, richly embroidered with gorgeous feather-work, and gold, and silk of varied dyes. A fillet of white roses bound her dark tresses, and her tiny feet were strapped in scarlet sandals. Smiles lighted up her fair face, and her soft doves eyes beamed with filial tenderness when raised to her lordly father.

Behind her, were the maidens of Gilead, clad in

white, with chaplets of red roses; their slender ancles circled with silver bells. Like leaves from a gay parterre swept onward by a summer breeze, these lovely flowrets floated in mazy whirls until beside the chariot of the conqueror. The daughter of Jephthah approached her father, and when the people looked to see him fold her in his embrace, with a frantic start, he rent the bosom of his gilded robe, and covering his head with his mantle he groaned with anguish. "My father!" said a gentle voice beside him. "Alas, my daughter!" cried the conquerer, with a burst of agony—"From my high estate of joy thou hast brought me low down in the dust!" There was deep silence while he spoke—"O God, forgive me! my child, forgive me! When I faced the children of Ammon in battle, I vowed, if the Lord would deliver them into my hands, I would offer up, as sacrifice unto him, the first that came forth from my house to meet me! Thou art the first—my child! my only one!"

A deep consternation fell upon the hearts of all, when this rash vow was heard—on all, save upon that fair and gentle creature who was the victim. With brow unblanched, and with a glow of generous self-devotion, she said to Jephthah—"My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do unto me as thou hast vowed. Thy God hath made thee con-

queror over thy enemies—the children of Ammon have fallen before thee, and if I am to be the price of victory, take me and do unto me according to thy vow. I die for my country and for my father—in that death there is no bitterness.” At the request of the Elders who now approached, Jephthah descended from his chariot, and, accompanied by them and his daughter, he entered his habitation. Here he threw himself upon the ground, covered his head with dust, and refused all his child’s endeavors to comfort him.

Meanwhile the Elders consulted aside, upon the best measures to be pursued in this sorrowful and unexpected emergency. That Jephthah should sacrifice his daughter, was not to be thought of, since, to offer her as a burnt offering would be worthy only of an idolater—it was an impossible, unheard of, detestable crime. But on the other side, it was urged, he had made a solemn vow to the Lord, and perhaps in consequence of that vow he had received the victory—must he now refuse to perform his vow? What evils might not the Lord, in anger, inflict upon them, if that were so.

Many days were passed in sorrow, and in deep perplexity by the people of Gilead. At last, it was determined by a council of Elders, that a deputation of their number should be sent to Shiloh, in order to

obtain the advice of the priests of the tabernacle upon this difficult and unhappy matter. The time of their absence was passed in great anxiety by the people, and in deep humiliation and anguish by Jephthah. Their approach was at length descried from the watch-tower—they entered the city, and, followed by a train of eager citizens, sought the unhappy Jephthah, who still remained upon the ground as they had left him, clothed with sackcloth, and covered with ashes.

“Hear, O Jephthah, the message of the High Priest of Israel!”—said the chief of the Elders—“Unlike a worshipper of Israel’s God, thou hast vowed to offer in burnt-sacrifice the first that came to meet thee from thy house—such offerings are an abomination to the Lord, and to punish thee for thy rashness, he hath sent thy daughter forth.” Jephthah answered with a groan of anguish.

“This sacrifice being forbidden by our laws, the person offered can be redeemed with money, and for a youthful female the priests demand ten sheckles.”

She may then be saved! and the people were preparing to shout with joy, at her deliverance, when, a wave from the Elders hand restrained them.

“Thou hast said, such, coming forth to meet thee, shall *surely be the Lord’s*, and by the laws of our holy Moses, things thus devoted, *cannot be redeem-*

ed." A sigh burst from many a bosom when they heard this cruel sentence. "Listen Jephthah to thy daughter's destiny—thou hast devoted her to be the Lord's, and as the Lord's her days must be spent in his service. She is henceforth forever dead to the world and dead to thee! She must be taken to Shiloh, where in perpetual virgin seclusion, her days must pass in the service of the tabernacle. She belongs no more to man, but must be kept as holy to the Lord." With this decree, the people were satisfied, and Jephthah was relieved. Still, his daughter was lost to him forever, and if not called upon to die, was doomed to a lonely life. How bitterly was his rash vow now repented! His cherished child, she whom he looked upon as the light and comfort of his declining years, must be to him as dead! To her, this destiny was worse than death. She had wrought her soul up to the great sacrifice of her life, but thus to lose home, and all held dear—to see none else but strangers near her—to surrender that fond hope, so cherished by her country women, of being the Saviour's mother, brought to her young bosom, a chill as if from the tomb. Her fair brow was but a moment clouded. No reproachful word came from her lip, but with a smile of heroic fortitude she turned to Jephthah.—"Cheer thee, my father! I am raised from death," she said. "My

life, devoted to my God, and given for my country, must be a happy one, for God will not willingly afflict his child." Jephthah threw his arms around his daughter, wetting her glossy locks with bitter tears. "Remember, thou hast many duties, and many honors father! Thou art a Judge of Israel. Thy brow is surrounded by a halo of glory, and thou hast much to render life dear to thee. Thou wilt forget this anguish soon, and, in worshipping thy God, and in thy country's service, will find peace at last."

Jephthah strained her to his heart in speechless sorrow. How could he part with this sweet child so lately restored to him! now become far dearer as her filial tenderness, her heroism and her religious faith became thus known to him. The maiden turned towards the Elders.

"I bow to the High-priest's decree, as a most righteous one," she said, "and I will yield me to his will. This only I would ask—give me some little time for preparation; to take farewell of all the friends and scenes so dear,—after this, I will accompany ye to Shiloh."

The Elders willingly acceded to her request, and then departed.

Some time was passed in preparation and in endeavors to soothe the sadness of her father, and then the daughter of Jephthah, accompanied by her

young female companions, her friends and attendants, set out upon a pilgrimage among the city's environs, to bid farewell to all those friends and places, among whom her childhoods happy days were spent. She passed from one spot to another among the beautiful mountain scenery of Gilead, bidding a weeping adieu to every cherished scene.

With her companions, she bewailed her hapless lot, and mourned that she must lose the hope of seeing the promised Saviour among her descendants. She then returned to her father's house, who solemnly surrendered her into the hands of the Elders, and by them she was taken to Shiloh.

The loss of Jephthah's daughter, was annually commemorated by the daughters of Israel at Gilead. Every year, upon the anniversary of this sad event, they walked in procession through the same paths she had trod with them, when bidding her early home adieu. Solemnly they wound among the hills, their fair hair hanging neglected upon their shoulders, and as they passed along, their silvery voices filled the groves while singing the following mourning hymn.

A LAMENT FOR JEPHTAH'S DAUGHTER.

Maid of Gilead, fare thee well !
Hear our mournful chorus swell,
While among these valleys lone,
We, for thee, are making moan.
Breezes of her natal sky,
Waft to her our pitying sigh.

Farewell Jephthah's daughter !

No mother watches o'er her bed—
No father blesses her young head—
Guarding her, no brothers stand—
Nor gentle smiling sister band—
Never may she, as a bride,
Grace a happy lover's side.

Farewell Jephthah's daughter !

Lonely virgin, not for thee
A parent's sweet anxiety ;
No 'olive buds' around thee twine,
No voices singing infant chime ;
And that bright hope is lost to thee,
Head of Messiah's line to be.

Farewell Jephthah's daughter !

Maid of Gilead, fare thee well!
Yearly shall this shady dell,
Mountain path, and verdant plain,
Echo our lamenting strain.
May our mournful chorus swelling,
Reach thee in thy lonely dwelling.
Farewell Jephthah's daughter!

THE HEROISM OF JUDITH.

“I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot.”—*Isaiah* xiv. 15.

JUDITH cannot properly be called a Heroine of Sacred History, as her story is drawn from the Apocryphal writings, which are rejected as uninspired, by all but the Romish Church. These books were read by the early primitive church, and are also read now in the Church of England, among the lessons of the day, “for example of life, and instruction of manner; but were not applied to establish any doctrine.” When these writing were first *Απο ἱερ κρυπῆς*, or removed from the ark or chest where the others were kept, three were retained and allowed to be read by catechumens, and the book of Judith was one of these three. That Judith was a character of Jewish history, and really performed the great action here related, is not doubted. Late travellers still point to the town of Saphet as the

ruins of Bethulia, and one of them purchased there those 'lumps of figs,' a preparation of the fruit similar to that which Judith carried among her provisions, so that she might not eat with idolaters. I have placed her beside the other heroines, as an example of what woman may do if she will sacrifice her happiness for the good of her friends or country.

E. R. S.

AMONG the great and glorious cities of the East, Ecbatana stood conspicuous for strength and beauty. In her extent and power, and the multitude of her palaces she could not compete with Nineveh or Babylon, but there was a grace in her architecture and beauty in her situation, as she reclined at the foot of a lofty mountain range, her white buildings showing brightly against the green back-ground, which won from every traveller expressions of admiration as he gazed. She was the pride of Media; and Arphaxad, the king, had newly fortified it to withstand a siege which was designed against it by Nebuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, from whom he had rebelled, and who was advancing with great force against them.

Vain were the precautions of Arphaxad. "Howl, oh, gate; cry, oh, city!" thy beauty and thy strength could not save thee! One after another fell her

seven walls, and her towers, and Ecbatana was laid low in the dust. Arphaxad fled to the mountains, but was pursued by the Assyrian—his darts pierced through the unfortunate king, and he died with his last look fixed in anguish upon his ruined Ecbatana, which lay smoking before him ; while his horsemen, his chariots, and his wealth fell into the hands of Nebuchodonosor.

The victor returned in triumph to Nineveh, where he feasted his army for twenty days. The feasting over, he prepared his war-chariots once more, breathing slaughter against those nations who had refused to assist him in his siege of Ecbatana. He had sent to the people of Damascus, and Judea, and Arabia, and Egypt, to join him ; a few had obeyed his voice, and the remainder were now destined to feel the vengeance of his fiery spirit.

He called together his chief officers, and in their presence swore to be revenged upon the rebellious cities, and to slay with the sword all their inhabitants. His purpose was warmly applauded by his soldiers and nobles, who were eager for the excitement and license of war.

The most trusty and valiant of all the generals of Nebuchodonosor, was Holoornes, a fitting agent for a revengeful king ; for, to valor he added a most cruel and unsparing disposition.

To him the Assyrian king gave the command of his armies. "Go!" he said to his general, "I, the great King, and Lord of the whole earth, command thee to go forth from my presence, and take with thee 120,000 foot and 12,000 horsemen and chariots—thou shalt go against the west country, because they have not obeyed me. See that they send me the tribute of earth and water in token I am the lord of the land and sea, or I will arise in my wrath, and will cover the earth with my armies, and give them as a spoil to my soldiers. Their slain shall fill the valleys and the brooks, and rivers shall overflow with their blood. Let not thine eye spare those who rebel, but put them to slaughter; for, as I live, and by the power of my kingdom! whatever my mouth hath spoken, that will my hand perform!"

Holofores, with a vast army of chariots and horsemen and camels and asses, followed by the tribes around, who swarmed like vultures to the prey, set out to execute his master's commands. He ravaged and destroyed all before him. Mesopotamia was laid waste, and the plains of Damascus were overrun; the wheat harvests were trampled down; flocks and herds destroyed; cities spoiled, and people slain. Many of the nations around were awed and sued for peace. Ambassadors from the

inhabitants of the sea-coast, from Tyre and Sidon came to him to entreat for mercy.

“Behold, we the servants of Nebuchodonosor, the great king, lie before thee,” they said, “use us as shall be good in thy sight. Behold our houses, our fields of wheat, our flocks and our tents lie before thy face, use them as it pleaseth thee. Behold, even our cities, and the inhabitants thereof are thy servants; come and do with them as seemeth good unto thee!”

Wherever he went, the Assyrian general saw all yield to his power, and he was welcomed with dances and timbrels, and crowned with garlands. These submissive cities were pardoned, but each received a garrison to enforce future good conduct, and the gods of the land were destroyed, that all might worship the gods of Assyria.

The approach of this great army brought dismay to the hearts of Israel and Judah; still the idea of submission was not for an instant harbored by this resolute people. They were strong in the consciousness of right, when they refused to assist in the downfall of Media; and resolved, whatever might betide, never to bow down to the gods of Assyria. Hoping their powerful King, Jehovah, would appear in their favor, they humbled themselves before him, and ‘cried to God with great

fervency. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were clothed with sackcloth, and with ashes on their heads, remained night and day before the temple, fasting, and offering gifts to the Lord that he might shew himself as the "shield of triumph." Joachim, the high priest, and all the other priests, covered themselves and the altar with sackcloth, and cast ashes upon their mitres, and "cried to God with all their power, that he would look upon the house of Israel graciously."

Still, no earthly means were neglected to repel the invading army. They were expected to come through the hills of Galilee, and upon the strongholds, situated among them, they depended for protection.

All the passes were fortified and victualled for a year, while Bethulia and Betomestham prepared to stand in the invader's path, and check his course, and even sacrifice themselves rather than permit the lawless idolater to place his foot in their holy temple so lately purified upon their return from captivity.

Holofoernes first found himself checked in his glorious career, in the mountain passes of Galilee. He saw he had met with a people of more power and courage than those nations which had so lately surrendered to him. Encamping his band between Geba and Scythopolis, he tarried a whole month to

gather around him all his chariots and horsemen to crush at once those rebellious hill forts, which had dared to resist him.

Bethulia, an almost impregnable city, situated upon a hill near the Sea of Galilee, was the point towards which he resolved to concentrate all his energies; thinking the fall of a post of such importance, would intimidate the rest, and he should find nothing to impede his victorious course to Jerusalem.

Unused to resistance, Holofernes chafed at this delay. Fearing he should lose much time and endure much in the siege of these hill fortresses, he called together a council of his officers, and Princes of Moab and other tributaries, to concert measures for the subjugation of the Galilean strongholds.

The general of the Assyrians was seated in a magnificent tent of scarlet cloth embroidered with gold, while around him were assembled his nobles and generals, and allied Princes.

"Tell me, ye sons of Canaan," he said, "who is this people that dwelleth in the hill country, and what are the cities they inhabit—what is the multitude of their army; what their power, and what King or Captain is set over them! Why come they not out to meet me, as do the cities around them?"

Achior, Prince of the Ammonites, stepped forward to answer the questions of Holofornes.

“Let my Lord now hear a word from the mouth of thy servant, and I will declare unto thee the truth concerning this people that dwelleth in the hill country; and there shall no lie come out of the mouth of thy servant. The inhabitants of this land are great and powerful; they rely for protection on no king, nor captain, but are governed and shielded by a great and wonderful God, who ever saveth them from harm, and revengeth them on those who go up to slay them.”

Achior related to Holofornes the history of the sons of Israel; told of their sojourn in the land of Egypt, where they were ill-treated, and revenged of their adversaries by their God, who smote the Egyptians, and drew his people thence by great and wonderful acts. He told of their triumphant entry into this country, led by God, who destroyed all nations around, that they might inhabit the land.

“Let not my Lord hope to subdue them,” continued Achior, “while they obey their God, as he never deserts them except they sin. Now, therefore, my Lord and my Governor, if this people *sin against their God*, they will not prosper, and we may go up and shall overcome them; they lately did depart from the way which their God appointed,

and were destroyed, in many battles sore, and were led captives into a strange land ; the temple of their God was cast down, and their cities taken by their enemies ; but now they have returned to their God, who has forgiven them, and have possessed Jerusalem and the hill country again. Now then let my Lord pass by them, lest their God defend them, and we become a reproach before the whole world."

The speech of Achior visibly affected the people who were assembled without the tent, and they trembled before the God of Israel ; especially as this account was confirmed by others who dwelt near the land of Judea.

Holofornes and his Captains perceived this, and were loud in their threatnings against those who had created a fear of the enemy in the soldiers' minds.

"Let us kill the traitor !" they cried, "we will not be afraid of the face of the children of Israel for lo, it is a people who cannot withstand our powerful army. Let us go up my Lord, and they shall be our prey !"

When the tumult had ceased, Holofornes cried out, "Who art thou, Achior, and ye hirelings of Ephraim, that have said we shall not make war upon the people of Israel because their God will defend them ; who is god but Nebuchodonosor !"

“Aye, Nebuchodonosor is god,” cried the assembly.

“Yea, he will send his power and will destroy them from the face of the earth,” continued the general, with fury in his looks; “and their God shall not defend them. We will tread them under foot—their mountains shall be drunken with their blood—their fields shall be filled with dead bodies, and they shall not be able to stand before us, and they shall utterly perish, saith King Nebuchodnosor, Lord of the whole earth! And thou, Achior, thou hireling of Ammon, since thou praisest this people, I will send thee among them; and we will see how they receive a son of Moab. But if they slay thee not, thou shalt be taken when the forts fall in my hand, and my sword shall pierce thy side. Go, coward, trust to the God of Israel!”

Achior was bound and led under the walls of Bethulia, where it was expected he would be perceived by the Israelites, and destroyed as a traitor and enemy to their country.

The city of Bethulia, crowned the summit of a steep and craggy hill, the approach to which was extremely difficult. The inhabitants relied upon the strength of their fortifications, and the goodness

of their cause,—for was it not a contest between their God, and the gods of Assyria!

The hopes of the young and brave were high, for a holy trust had been confided to them; they held the key of Israel in their hands, as the country could not be entered except through the passes of their mountains, and their sacred city and temple relied upon them for protection.

The old and reflecting, however, were not so sanguine. They trusted not in an arm of flesh, for they well knew the great power of the Assyrians, and their determination to conquer them. To God alone they looked for deliverance, but he might for their sins see fit to give them into the power of their enemies.

The army of Assyria was now known to be near. The city, from its elevated position commanded a view of the country around, and the houses and battlements were filled with people watching for their approach.

The band who brought Achior was soon perceived and a sally was made against them; but leaving Achior, bound, they escaped. He was loosed and carried into the presence of Ozias, Chabris, and Charmis, the governors of the city, who demanded the cause of his captivity.

Achior stated all that had passed in the council of

the Assyrian general ; told of the contempt of the enemy, and the defence of their God made by himself. Then the people fell down and worshipped God, crying—

“ Lord God of Heaven ! behold the pride of Assur—pity the nation, and look this day upon the face of those thou hast sanctified ! ”

Achior was warmly applauded for his conduct. Ozias took him to his own house, where he held a feast, after which he and the elders called on the God of Israel with all their might for help.

A noble widow dwelt in Bethulia ; her husband, Manasses, was a man of wealth and rank, but while overseeing his men in the barley harvest, was struck by the sun and died. Judith, his widow, never ceased to mourn for her husband, to whom she was tenderly attached ; and still wore widow's apparel, and fasted and dressed in sackcloth except on the feasts of new moon, and other festivals of Israel. By the strength and elevation of her character, she comforted her town's-people, and infused into their hearts some of her own courageous spirit. The women of Bethulia, especially, relied upon her for counsel and support ; for they felt as women must always feel, when a great and successful army approaches a city. Powerless themselves, they could but look upon the contest in which were perishing

their husbands and children. The excitement of the combat might conceal its horrors from those engaged in it, but the observer from afar, sees all its peril, and all its distress. The warrior knows, if he fall in battle, his name will live in the records of his country, but there are few feminine hearts which can thus be consoled for the loss of their dearest and best. Honor fails to heal the wounds of a lacerated bosom.

Although Judith reposed fearlessly on the arm of her God, she was not without anxiety, and often resorted to the roof of her house, where she had erected a leafy bower, as shelter from the sun—to watch for the enemy. Here she gazed out upon the extensive and verdant scenery before her, musing upon the history of her nation, mourning for her lost husband, or communing with her God.

One morning the weather being extremely warm, Judith ascended to her roof, and seated herself in her bower. What a fair and variegated landscape was spread out beneath her feet; around her were hills and mountains without number, rising and falling like green waves over the land, crowned with castles, and clothed with olive and vine; while far beyond, rose the dark chain of Anti Libanus, its snow crowned summit contrasting coolly with the bright sea of Galilee, which lay beneath, the sum-

mer's sun reflected brilliantly from its surface. At her right was Mount Carmel, and its attendant hills; and on the left, Mount Tabor stood frowning, its sides clothed with forests of oak, while a fortress arose from its summit. Lovely valleys and plains lay around and between these hills, covered with verdure, and spotted with villages.

How many scenes, celebrated in her nation's history, lay before her—scenes which had witnessed the valor of her countrymen, and favor of God! Would Jehovah desert them now? She hoped not and resolved if efforts or prayers might avail, her's should all be given for the salvation of Judea.

While plunged in alternate musing and prayer, Judith was aware of the sudden glitter upon a distant summit. She started and gazed. Broader and broader spreads the brightness. Could it be? Yes, it must be the dreaded foe whose spears were flashing back in defiance, the sun of Palestine. Judith despatched in haste a messenger to the governors of the city. They hasten to the ramparts, where, amid crowd's of their town's-people, they gazed at the approaching invaders. Every hill was soon crowned by bands of the hostile Assyrians, who, in masses of crimson and gold, poured like fiery lava down upon the devoted plains around the city. It was a

splendid, but fearful array, and the citizens of Bethulia gazed in alternate dread and admiration.

What a change a few hours wrought in the scene upon which Judith had looked. The land, once of a universal, peaceful green, now appeared a summer-garden, glittering with every brilliant hue. Tents of blue and scarlet and yellow, enamelled the ground; while spots of purple, and crimson, and gold marked the place where the soldiery were encamped. The openings of the hills which once showed long green vistas, streaked by the sunbeams, now glared with the soldiers' brazen shields, or brass plates which covered solemn-paced elephants. Plumes were waving, standards glancing in the sun, trumpets awaking the echoes, and all was gladness and hope.

The citizens gazed upon this brilliant array in mournful silence. The hope of escaping that powerful army seemed vain; and one universal feeling pervaded their bosoms—unless God helped them, they were lost.

Ozias turned to the other governors, who stood near. "Now will these men lick up the face of the earth," he said, "for neither are the high mountains nor the hills able to bear their weight. Let us to prayer, brethren, and haply God will relieve us in this our woeful strait."

At the next council held by Holofornes, one of the chiefs of Esau stood forth to speak. "Let my lord now hear a word," he said, "that there be no delay to our army. The children of Israel do not trust in their spears, but in their situation, because it is not easy for our chariots and horsemen to ascend their mountain. At the foot of this hill are the fountains which supply the city. These are protected by bands of men; send thy servants to get these fountains out of their hands, so that they shall all die of thirst, they, and their wives and children; or surrender the city. Then shall thou render to them their reward for rebelling against my Lord."

Holofornes was well pleased with this counsel, and immediately despatched a powerful band of soldiers, which after a short battle, gained possession of the fountains of Bethulia.

The young are not long depressed. On that day the youthful warriors of Bethulia, by speaking in contempt of the foe, and courageous vauntings, and military show, rallied the spirits of the citizens; but when they beheld their guards driven in, and learned that their fountains were in possession of the enemy, every heart sank, and despair seized on the city. Prayer and sackcloth were again resorted to, and all confessed that God alone could save them.

Judith mourned at home, alone. "We shall be a

prey to the spoiler," she said, "our beloved city, the birth place and sepulchre of my husband, Manasses, will be levelled with the ground, and over our ruins the invader will rush upon Jerusalem.

"O, my God, hast thou willed this city's fall! Wilt thou permit thy holy Temple to be desecrated by infidel hands? It cannot be,—thou hast said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' and on this promise I will trust. But are we right to rest quietly here, and die of starvation and thirst. Oh, that I were a man," thought the noble widow, "and I would be up and doing; I would strike a blow for my country. But what avail is there in the might of man—truly I am a weak, powerless woman; but have not women ere now saved their country—am I not now looking down upon the great plain of Zaanannim, where such mighty deeds were done by Deborah and by Jael? Why may I not do the same? Am I not famed in the land for talent above my fellows, and shall I not employ this gift of God in the service of my country, and of our holy temple? O, Lord of heaven! look down upon thy servant, and deign to accept her as an agent in the salvation of her country! Let me be a second Deborah in the land, and chase hence this Sisera who seeketh our destruction."

There seemed no help for the citizens of Bethu

lia. Sadly did they gaze upon their cisterns and founts in the city, as day by day the waters diminished, and provisions failed, and they knew they must die a dreary death, or be given to the enemy who were raging for them below. At last the water failed, and the citizens fell fainting in the streets, and many died each day. Then the people, rendered weak by suffering, called upon their rulers to surrender to the Assyrians, this being now the only hope for their lives. They assembled in a tumultuous manner before the house of Ozias, crying, "God be judge between us and you. You do us a great injury that you do not require peace of the children of Assur. We have no helper. God hath sold us into the hands of Holofores. Send for him, then, and give him the city as a spoil, and we will be his slaves, for this is better than to die of thirst, and see our wives and children die!"

Weeping and groaning was heard on all sides, and they "cried to God with a loud voice," saying, "We take to witness against you, heaven and earth, and God, the Lord of our fathers, if ye do not surrender quickly."

"Brethren, be of good courage," said Ozias. "God will not forsake us utterly. Let us endure five days, and in that time God may look in mercy towards us. If at the end of these days there come

no help for us, I will do as it may seem good to you."

The citizens were pacified with this promise, and departed each to his own dreary dwelling, there to struggle for life five days ere they be given up to slavery, or perhaps, death. In silence they awaited their doom—hope for assistance from on high nearly deserted them, and sighs alone disturbed the mournful silence of the so lately animated city. After the dispersion of the people, Ozias received a request from the noble widow, Judith, praying his presence at her house, accompanied by Charmis and Chabris when she would show him a way to save the city. They immediately repaired thither.

"Hear me now, ye Governors of Bethulia!" said Judith, when they were seated. "The words which ye have spoken to the people this day, are not right, saying ye will deliver the city to the enemy, unless God help us within five days. Who are ye, that thus promise the help of God, and tempt Him thus? Ye know ye cannot find the depth of the heart of man, how, then, can ye pretend to know the mind of God, who hath made all things—or how comprehend His purposes? God is not a man that He may be forced or threatened from His purpose, and if He do not save us within five days, He may after that. Let us call upon Him to help us, and He will

if it please Him, for we worship no other God but Him, and He will not despise us, nor let Judea be wasted. Now, therefore, brethren, let us keep of good heart yet a while longer, for our brothers depend on us to defend the altar and the sanctuary. Remember what things God did to Abraham and Isaac, and what happened to Jacob; wait on the Lord in patience, and He will yet save us."

"All that thou hast spoken," said Ozias, "hast thou spoken out of a good heart, and there is none who may gainsay thy words. From thy youth, all men have known thy understanding, and this is not the first day that thy wisdom has been manifested; but the people were very thirsty, and compelled us to promise to surrender, and bring an oath upon ourselves which we cannot break. Therefore, pray thou for us, for thou art a holy woman, that the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns, and we shall hold out yet a while longer."

"Hear me!" said Judith, "and I will do a thing which few women would do, but which is now the only way to save the nation. Accompany me this night to the city gate, and let me and my waiting-woman pass forth, and within the days which ye have promised to deliver the city to the Assyrians, the Lord will save Israel by my hand! Inquire not

ye of mine act, for I will not declare it unto you till the things I propose shall be finished.

“Go in peace,” said the governors, “and the Lord God go before thee to take vengeance on our enemies!”

At the time when the evening incense was offered to the Lord in Jerusalem, Judith clothed herself in sackcloth, and throwing ashes upon her head, knelt in prayer. “O, Lord God of our father Simeon!” she said, “hear me, a lonely widow! Behold, the Assyrians are multiplied in their power; they are exalted with horse and man—they glory in the strength of their chariots—they trust in shield and spear, in bow and sling, and know not that thou art God who breakest the battles. Throw down their strength by thy power, for they have purposed to defile thy sanctuary where thy glorious name resteth, and cast down thy tabernacle with their sword. Behold their pride, and give into my hand the power to cast them down—deign to bless my purpose, and smite them by the hand of a woman. Thou, who art the God of the afflicted, the protector of them who are forlorn and without hope, hear my prayer, save us, and make every nation and tribe acknowledge that thou art the God, and there is none other protector of Israel but thee!”

When her prayer was ended, Judith arose, and

having anointed herself, she plaited her hair, adorned it with jewels, and arrayed herself in one of her rich dresses which she had not worn since the death of her husband, Manasses ;—her feet were decorated with sandals of scarlet and gold, while bracelets, chains and rings, ornamented the rest of her person. She was a woman renowned for beauty, and now that her majestic person was attired in costly and graceful raiment, she well might hope to attract the notice of the Assyrian General.

Having laden her maid with a bottle of wine, a cruise of oil, a bag of parched corn, and bread, and lumps of figs, she sat out for the city gate. The three Governors were waiting for her, and when they beheld her stately form approach, so richly decked, they broke forth in expressions of admiration.

“Welcome, noble Judith !” they exclaimed
“May the God of our fathers show thee favor, and enable thee to accomplish the enterprize thou hast undertaken to the glory of the children of Israel, and the exaltation of Jerusalem !”

At the request of Judith, the city gates were opened, and she passed forth with her maid, the three Governors looking after her until she had gone down the hill, passed the valley, and they could see her no more.

The heroic Judith had not long left the city, ere she was challenged by the enemy's sentinel.

"Who art thou? whence comest thou? and where goest thou?" he said.

"I am a Hebrew woman," replied Judith. "I have fled from the city to the Assyrian camp, to go before Holofores, the captain of your army, and show him a way to take the city, and pass through the hill country without the loss of a man."

The man gazed upon her in astonishment, so beautiful and so magnificently dressed, and alone. "Thou doest well to save thy life by fleeing to Holofores," he said. "Follow me, and I will conduct thee to his tent, and when thou standest before him, be not afraid, but say all thou wilt and he will entreat the well."

So pleased were the guards with the appearance of this noble woman, that they placed her in a chariot, and with a train of a hundred men she entered the camp. As she passed, every one looked on with wonder and admiration, and while waiting without the tent of Holofores, the people gathered around, uttering loud expressions of admiration. "Truly, these children of Israel are wondrous people," said one. "If their women are such noble creatures, what must their men be? Who would despise this people, who have among them such women?"

“So much more need is there of their extermination,” said another, “for they are likely to become troublesome neighbors.”

It was now quite dark, and Holofornes came from the tent, his servants bearing silver lamps before him. The general lifted her from the chariot, and led her into the tent. In the centre stood a couch, above which was a rich canopy of cloth, woven with purple and gold, and emeralds and precious stones. Holofornes seated himself, and motioned Judith to take a place beside him, but she threw herself upon the ground before him, imploring his mercy and protection. The Assyrian commanded his servants to raise her, saying, “Woman, be of good comfort—fear not in thy heart, for I never hurt any thing which is willing to serve King Nebuchodonosor, the King of all the earth. If thy people that dwelleth in the mountains, had not set light by me, I would not have lifted up my spear against them. But now, tell me, why thou art fled from them and come to us; here thou art safe, for none shall do thee hurt, but entreat thee well, as they do the servants of our King, Nebuchodonosor.”

“Remember the words of thy servant,” said Judith, “and suffer thy handmaid to speak in thy presence, and I will declare no lie to my Lord this night. If thou wilt follow the words of thine handmaid,

God, through thee, will bring wonderful things to pass. As Nebuchodonosor, King of all the earth liveth! men and cattle and cities shall live by the power under Nebuchodonosor, and all his house. We have heard of the wisdom and policy of Holofernes; and it is every where reported that thou art the most powerful and excellent man in all Assyria, and mighty in knowledge, and wonderful in feats of war. My Lord," continued Judith, "Achior hath been saved by our people, and hath declared all that passed in thy council, and of what he said regarding the children of Israel, who could not be conquered *unless they sin*, for their God protects them. Therefore, O my Lord and Governor, lay his words to thy heart, for they are true, and our nation cannot be punished, nor shall thy sword prevail against them, except they sin against their God. But now, my Lord, this people have resolved upon a great sin, and God will give them into the power of their enemies. Their victuals and water have become scant, and they have agreed to consume all the cattle and those animals and things which God, by his laws, hath forbidden them to eat! Thy handmaid knowing this, hath fled from the guilty city, lest I perish with them, and God hath sent me to tell thee, so that thou might be an instrument in His hand to punish the Israelites. Thy servant is religious, my

Lord, and serveth God night and day, and He will reveal to me the moment when the people eat forbidden things, and consume the first fruits of the corn, and tenths of wine and oil, which have been sanctified and reserved for the priests who serve the Lord in Jerusalem—things not lawful for our people to touch with their hands. Now, then, my Lord, be guided by me. Permit thy handmaid to go out in the plain each night to pray, and God will tell me when they have done this sin, and I will tell thee, then shalt thou go forth with thine army, and thou shalt have an easy victory.”

Holofornes was astonished at all he heard. He thanked Judith for her offered services, and declared himself ready to act as she might dictate ; while the officers and nobles who stood around, declared, “There was not such a woman on the whole face of the earth for beauty or wisdom.”

“God hath done well to send thee hither,” said Holofornes, “that by our hands destruction may come upon them that lightly regard him. Fair Judith, thou art beautiful in thy countenance, and witty in thy words. Surely, if thou do as thou hast spoken, thy God shall be my God, and thou shalt dwell in the house of Nebuchodonosor, and be renowned throughout the whole earth !”

At the evening feast, Holofornes called Judith to

a seat near him, and would have given her of his own rich repast and wine, but she said, "Not so, my Lord, for it is against our laws, but I have here provision according to our customs, which I will eat."

"What if thy provisions fail? asked Holoornes. "We have none of thy nation here to prepare it for thee."

"As thy soul liveth, my Lord," said Judith, "these things shall not be expended ere thy handmaid shall work all that her Lord hath given her to do."

At her request, Holoornes gave orders to the guard to permit Judith to go out and in, to her prayers without the camp, that she might unmolested watch for the propitious moment to attack Bethulia. Judith then retired to a tent prepared for her, where she reposed until midnight; when she arose, and followed by her maid, went out in the valley to pray. How mixed were the emotions which passed through the bosom of the devoted Judith as she watched out the hours of night in that lonely plain. Her maid, stationed at some distance, was asleep, the watch-fires were out, the camp was silent, and of all nature, she alone seemed alive. As she revolved the great project for which she had come,

the woman conquered, and her gentle nature revolted.

“Shall I be a shedder of blood!” she said. “Can it be right to murder him? I cannot do it; my whole soul shudders at the thought! I, who refused to crush the insect which offended me, shall I destroy man—shall I lay him low who now treadeth the earth so gloriously. O that there were some other way! How shall these small, these tender hands, smite the lordly Assyrian? Perchance he hath a wife who watcheth for him at home, and loves him as I loved my lost Manasses. Shall I make her the lonely widow that I am? O, Father above, save me from all this duplicity and crime!”

As Judith raised her eyes, they fell upon the gloomy towers of Bethulia, distinctly seen against the star-lit sky. She thought upon all the misery and despair within those silent walls, and of the many hearts who were looking to her for deliverance, and her strength of purpose again returned. Crushing her woman’s tenderness, she arose, firmly resolved to tread unshrinkingly the path she had chosen, which, even if it led through blood, would save her country, and the holy temple. Holofernes once slain, his dastard soldiers, no longer guided by his experienced hand, would be scattered like rushes before the wind.

On the fourth day, Holofornes made a great feast. Calling Bagoas, his confidential servant to him, he said, "Go, now, and persuade this Hebrew woman whom I have placed in thy charge, to come in to my feast and drink with me. It is a shame to have this splendid woman here and not share more of her company; truly, she will laugh us to scorn."

Bagoas sought Judith. "Fair damsel," he said, "art thou afraid of my Lord that thou comest not into his presence? Come and drink wine, and be merry with us, and be made this day as one of the daughters of Assyria, which serve in the house of Nebuchodonosor."

"Who am I, that I should gainsay my lord?" said Judith. "Surely, whatsoever pleaseth him, I will do speedily, and it shall be my joy unto the day of my death!"

Radiant with beauty, and in rich attire, Judith entered the banquet tent, and seated herself on a couch spread with soft furs which her maid had prepared for her, opposite to Holofornes. The Assyrian gazed in rapture, and resolved to leave nothing undone to gain this beauteous Hebrew to himself.

"Drink and be merry with us, Judith," he said. "Be not afraid of me, for my heart is filled with

love for thee. Thou art the fairest of women, O Judith."

"I will drink, now, my Lord," said Judith, "because my life is magnified in me this day more than all the days since I was born."

Judith ate and drank what her maid had prepared, and so excited the Assyrian by her beauty and wit, that he drank more than he had ever been accustomed, and Judith foresaw he would be in a state fitting for her purpose. When the feast was over, and the guests departed, Bagoas dismissed the servants, while he closed the tent, and left Judith alone with Holofernes.

The Assyrian, insensible to the presence of his charming guest, had thrown himself on his couch, where he now lay in a drunken slumber. The propitious moment had arrived for the execution of the great purpose for which Judith had come. She listened—all was silent, and she approached the couch. The terrible enemy—her country's destroyer was before her; one blow of her hand, and Israel would be free!

"Shall I slay thee sleeping?" murmured Judith, "thou who wast so kind to me—whose words of love but now have met mine ear? Yea, bloodhound! thou that wouldst slaughter my brethren—that

wouldst demolish our holy temple! thy hour is come! If that form be erect to-morrow—if that arm be stretched out, Israel is lost! O, Lord God of all power! look down upon me now, and bless the work of my hand, for the exaltation of Jerusalem!”

At the head of the couch hung a falchion. Judith, taking the weapon in one hand, and the hair of her drunken foe in the other, and exclaiming, “O, Lord of Israel, strengthen me this day!” smote off the Assyrian’s head. At her signal her maid entered, who, tearing down the jewelled canopy, wrapped the head in it, and placed it in her bag. Following her mistress, they left the camp unmolested, as if for their usual prayer; and hastened up to the gate of Bethulia.

“Open! open now the gate!” cried the successful Judith to the guard. “God, even our God, is with us, to show his power yet in Jerusalem, and for the downfall of Assyria! The watchmen ran down joyfully to admit her, and brought her to an open space near the gate, where stood the Governors and a large concourse of people around a large watch-fire; who had thus been waiting and watching for her, since the evening of her departure. “Praise! praise God!” cried Judith, advancing towards them. “Praise God, for he hath not taken away his mercy

from the house of Israel, but hath destroyed our enemies by my hand this night! Behold the head of Holoernes!" she continued, as her maid held up the head, "the chief Captain of the army of Assur! and behold the glittering canopy under which he did lie in his drunkenness! The Lord hath smitten him by the hand of a woman! As the Lord liveth, who kept me in my way as I went! my countenance hath deceived him to his destruction, and yet hath he not committed sin with me, to defile or shame me."

The people were astonished; they gazed on the heroic woman in silence, and then, as if by one impulse, bowed themselves and worshipped God.

"Blessed be thou, O, our God!" they said. "This day thou hast brought to nought the enemies of thy people."

"O, daughter!" cried Ozias, "blessed art thou of the most high God, above all women upon the earth; and blessed be the Lord God, which hath created the heavens and the earth, which hath directed thee to the cutting off the head of the chief of our enemies. May thy confidence in the power of God, dispose the hearts of men to remember him in affliction. And God turn these things to thy perpetual praise, to visit thee with good things, because thou hast offered thyself for the good of our nation;

hast revenged us, and walked straight before thy God!"

And all the people with one voice, cried, "Amen!"

"Hear me now, my brethren," said Judith, "take this head and hang it upon the highest place of your walls; and soon as the morning shall appear, and the sun come forth upon the earth, send out all the soldiers from the city, as if to make a sally upon the Assyrians—but go not down. Then shall they assemble themselves and put on their armor, and go to the tent of Holofornes, to awaken him; and lo, when they find him so mysteriously dead, fear will fall upon them, and they shall fly. Then pursue them, ye Israelites, and they shall be a spoil to your arms. But before ye do these things, call me hither Achior, that he may behold him that despised the God of Israel."

Achior was sent for, and when he saw the multitude of people, and the head of Holofornes, which a soldier held aloft, and beheld the heroic Judith, standing before him, arrayed in magnificent attire, her countenance glowing, and her eyes flashing proudly upon the fallen Assyrian, he thought the avenging Deity of the Israelites stood before him, and he fainted at her feet.

When he revived, he kissed the hem of her robe,

exclaiming, "Blessed art thou in Judea: and all the nations at the hearing of thy name shall be astonished! Tell me all thou hast done to bring to pass these wonderful things."

Judith related minutely all she had done since leaving the city. The people listened attentively, and when she finished, they shouted aloud for joy, and accompanied her with all honor and reverence to her home.

When the morning broke, the head of Holofores was hung out upon the wall, and the Israelites assembled without the gates. As soon as they were perceived the Assyrian guard ran to awaken their captains.

"Awaken our Lord, Holofores," they said to Bagoas, "for the slaves have the boldness to threaten battle. Let us go up and destroy them."

Bagoas knocked at the tent, but receiving no answer, ventured to enter, when the headless body of their general met his astounded view. Crying with horror, and rending his garments, he ran to the tent of Judith, and her absence confirmed all his suspicions.

"Treason, treason!" he cried, rushing out among the soldiers; "the slaves have dealt treacherously, and this Hebrew woman hath brought shame upon the house of Nebuchodonosor. Holofores is slain!"

“Holofores is slain!” re-echoed through the camp, and the soldiers trembled at the sound. The dread of the Israelite’s God, which the words of Achior had inspired, had never left their bosoms; and now, completely terrified, they every moment expected this awful God to appear, and strike them as he had their general. The people rushed madly about. Confusion prevailed, and in spite of all the efforts of their officers, the panic spread from rank to rank, and the army fled, half of them knowing not all that had happened, but only hearing that the avenging God of the Hebrews was pursuing them.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”

The step of the avenger, however, was not far behind them. The inhabitants of Bethulia rushed out after the fugitives, and sending messengers to the towns around, the people ran out, and soon the miserable Assyrians were assailed on all sides by the citizens of Betomestham, and Chobai, and the people of the hill country of Galilee, and of the sea coasts. Thousands were slaughtered, and Israel was free!

The spoils were great from the camp of the Assyrians which fell into the hands of the Bethulians.

Great was the joy of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at their deliverance, and the name of Judith of Be-

thulia was in every one's mouth, with terms of wonder and praise. To do her all possible honor, Joacim, the High-Priest, resolved to visit and thank her for the salvation of her country.

Accompanied by a long train of the priesthood, and the great and good of Jerusalem, he arrived before the gate of Bethulia. Judith came forth to meet him, and knelt before him. Blessings were showered upon her by every voice.

"Arise my daughter," said the High Priest. "Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the great glory of Israel! thou art the joy and rejoicing of our nation. Thou hast done much good in Israel, with thy hand; and God is pleased therewith. Blessed be thou of the Almighty Lord forevermore!" And all the people cried "Amen!"

To Judith was given the tent of Holofores, which was of costly material, adorned with gold and jewels; and with it all his plate, and beds of silver, and vessels of gold, and rich stuffs. This she resolved to dedicate to the Lord in Jerusalem. It was placed upon a triumphal car, followed by a great train of priests, and soldiers, whose armor was adorned with garlands, and who shouted for joy.

Judith followed by her maid, both crowned with olive garlands, preceded the car, surrounded by the women of Bethulia, dancing, and singing songs of

praise. When arrived in sight of Jerusalem, they pointed to the temple, which like a snowy mountain, reflected the rays of the sun.

“Behold our Sacred Temple!” they cried. “Thou hast saved it from the idolater. Behold it is glorious in gold and in marble and in precious stones, and but for thee it were a smoking ruin!” Tears of joy and gratitude, fell from the eyes of Judith, and she felt she was repaid for all she had done.

The procession ascended to the city, and up the marble steps of the Temple, and through its magnificent courts into the glorious space which surrounds the Temple itself. Here were offered their sacrifices and burnt-offerings and free-offerings. Judith felt a glow of gratitude to God as she gazed around her upon the sculptured marble, the altar of brass, and the brazen laver, and marble tables, and other rich furniture of the Court; and as she beheld the graceful Temple whose richly embroidered curtain was raised giving her a view of golden furniture, and scarlet and purple within; for she remembered that her feeble arm, made strong by God, had saved all these sacred things from the hand of the enemy. The High Priest was there in his splendid robes of blue and purple and scarlet embroidery, adorned with jewels, and bordered with golden bells

and scarlet pomegranates—while around him stood the sons of Levi, in their blue fringed robes of white linen—together a glorious and most wonderful array.

Judith, unable to repress her feelings longer, broke forth in the following song of thanksgiving and triumph, while the people accompanied her with instruments and shouting :

JUDITH'S SONG.

Strike to the Lord on the loud sounding cymbal,
Sing, and ring out the sweet bells of the timbrel,
Exalt, with new songs, our Lord's glorious name !
Who put the bold sons of Assyria to shame.

Our mountains were clothed by the hosts of the foe ;
In vain, through their ranks, seek our torrents to flow ;
On, on ! like the waves of the dark rolling main,
O'er mountains, they come, over valley and plain.

Then trembled our boldest, their vauntings were hushed,—
The hopes of our bravest and wisest were crushed ;
In terror, we called on Jehovah for aid,
He spoke, and the waves of destruction were staid.

The mighty hath fallen, but not in the fray,
For Judith came forth in her festive array,
In sandals and tire, wrought with jewels and gold,
And heart, by the might of Jehovah made bold.

She dazzled the foe by the power of her charms,
And rescued her land from the fear of his arms ;

The son of Assyria was caught in her toils;
His tent and his riches and gold were her spoils.

With falchion uplifted, she called on the Lord—
She struck, and Judea was freed by her sword.
Then quailed the Assyrian, and Media grew pale,
And trembled the Perse at the terrible tale.

Their leader has fallen! they fly at the sound—
Our spearmen pursue, and their dead strew the ground.
Then shout, sons of Judah! and sing a new song,
To our glorious Lord, at whose presence the strong
Are bow'd to the earth, and mountains o'erthrown;
And rocks from their summits are shaken and strown.

Woe, woe, to the nations who threaten us harm
Against them Jehovah shall stretch out his arm,
And vengeance and fire shall pursue them for ever,
And the voice of their wailing and weeping cease never!

THE MORAL.

In judging the conduct of Judith, we must keep in mind the different manners which prevailed in those days. We cannot but wonder and admire when we reflect upon all she hazarded for her country. She endangered more than life, for if discovered, she ran the risk of death, or of living in degradation and sorrow. She periled her fair fame, which to a woman was worth more than existence. The task which she undertook was odious, yet she

shrank not from it, for she knew if the conqueror lived, her country was lost.

We may not be called to such a trial, but in whatever straight, when self is the sacrifice let us pray for strength to look to the good of others before our own. Or, in the words of our Messiah!

“ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ! ”

MEMOIR
OF
MRS. SARAH LOUISA TAYLOR.

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MEMOIR OF MRS. SARAH LOUISA TAYLOR : *or an Illustration of the work of the Holy Spirit, in awakening, renewing, and sanctifying the heart.* By LOT JONES, A. M., New-York : John S. Taylor. 1838, pp. 324.

Memoirs of individuals have become so common, that not a few may be ready to ask, Why publish another? We have no fears that the above question will be asked by any one *after* reading this volume. If he does not feel 'reproved, corrected, or instructed in righteousness,' it will be because he has made pre-eminent attainments in scriptural knowledge, and holy, useful living; or else because his conscience has lost its susceptibility. In Mrs. Taylor religion appears with dignity as well as grace, in power as well as beauty. Hers was the faith which 'works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.' Its fruits were choice and abundant. Nor were her virtues cancelled, or their influence more than destroy

NOTICES.

ed by gross defects and blemishes. She had uncommon symmetry and harmony of character. With a uniform and controlling desire to do good, she never lacked the means and opportunity; and did much, in the best and highest sense of the expression. She won not a few to righteousness. Her religion was a religion of diligence and energy, rendering her "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" and her labor was "not in vain."

We see in Mrs. T. the same religion, in its essential elements, and in its more important developments, which glowed in and beamed forth from the "great cloud of witnesses;"—the same faith, the same humility, the same dependence on atoning blood, the same susceptibility to the constraining influence of Christ's love: "We thus judge, that, if Christ died for all, then all were dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them." We see deep religious experience, but no extravagance—strong feelings, but no fanaticism—absorbing devotion, but no cant—firmness of principle, but no party bigotry. We have here, not only holiness in its principle, but the *beauty* of holiness adorning and perfecting the character.

Mr. Jones was greatly favoured in the subject of his narrative; and he has wrought up his materials with great skill and judgment. Nothing has been inserted, which would have been better omitted; and nothing appears to be wanting, which was necessary to a just appreciation of her character.

We unhesitatingly commend this Memoir to all females, in all ranks of society. The most refined and best educated will rise from its perusal, improved in literary taste, intellectual expansion, and correct thinking; and the less favored will learn from it what it is in their power to become by diligence, by prayer, by studying the Scriptures, by a whole-hearted devotedness to the duties which they owe to God and their fellow men.



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